

**Window
on
Jordan**

Herbal medicine Did you know it has so many benefits!

By Iham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

MAN'S QUEST for knowledge never ends, and in his search for simplicity and safety has no limits. After experimenting with many chemically produced drugs and suffering from their side-effects, people have come to realize that the best option is to revert to simple and natural remedies.

Over the last few years, many people all over the world have realized such facts and concluded that nature is the best pharmacy. Today, some

doctors and herbs' specialists are adopting the "Let's go back to nature," slogan.

"The harm that have befallen many because of chemical drugs and their associated side effects has led to a revolution with people reverting to the use of natural treatment," says the well-known Arab Herb specialist, Khamis Ali Al Bitar.

Such a trend has been adopted all over the world, especially in Europe and the United States, he tells *The Star*.

Likewise, the use of natural herbs continues in

Jordan. "It is considered part of our heritage and most Jordanians prefer herbs to other manufactured medicines," he adds.

Al Bitar, who is the owner of the only specialized company in herbs in the world "Systema Scientific Research and Technological Development for Agriculture and Industry", points out that natural treatment is not restricted to herbs, but also there are other methods such as contemplation and relaxation."

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The Star

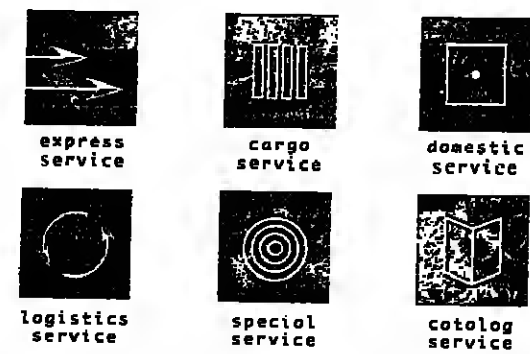
**Jordan's political, economic
and cultural weekly**

Le Jourdain
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● **Travailleurs étrangers :
trois ans pour rien**

● **Rencontre avec le pape
d'Abu Marjoub**

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Clinton fails to push Netanyahu on West Bank redeployment

By John F. Harris and
Barton Gellman

WASHINGTON—President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plunged into the stalled Middle East peace process Tuesday in a White House summit in which Clinton presented in detail a new approach for reviving progress between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Ninety minutes of mostly cordial talk interspersed with at least a few heated moments between the two leaders, who have had a tense relationship—were deemed productive enough by both sides that Netanyahu returned to the White House Tuesday night for a second session with Clinton that began at 10 pm and ended about midnight, according to US and Israeli officials.

After letting the peace process drift for much of 1997, on the assumption that neither Netanyahu nor Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was sufficiently committed to overcoming differences, Clinton this week is throwing himself back into the process in what seemed an unprecedented level of personal involvement in the specific elements of a possible deal. Clinton is scheduled to meet with Arafat on Thursday.

The proposals Clinton presented to Netanyahu Tuesday were disclosed in scant detail. But administration and Israeli officials said Clinton offered ideas about how much land Israel should cede to the Palestinian Authority on the disputed West Bank, and in what sequence—a subject over which Clinton and Netanyahu Tuesday remained divided. Clinton also spelled out specific security guarantees Israel could expect in return from the Palestinians, the officials said.

Lurie's NewsCartoon



Netanyahu's Coalition

Most notably, Clinton presented a new approach of the best way to carry out what under earlier accords is supposed to be a three-phase West Bank withdrawal. Rather than carry out the next phase of this withdrawal in one swoop, Israeli officials said Clinton and other administration officials suggested proceeding in a succession of smaller withdrawals. In exchange, the Palestinians would adopt a series of concrete security measures—including arrests, intelligence sharing and removal of sup-

porters of the terror-supporting group Hamas from mosques and schools.

Administration officials declined to elaborate on elements of the new plan, but did not dispute the Israeli account. The plan represents a significant change of approach. While the administration once believed that repeated debate over small withdrawals was impractical because of Netanyahu's precarious position in his governing coalition, the prevailing view now is that there is no other way to move ahead than

for the two sides to take more discrete confidence-building steps.

Still critically at issue is the total size of the withdrawal. Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made clear in their meetings with Netanyahu that the United States believes Israel must make withdrawals in the current phase of the 1993 Oslo agreement that add up to "double digits"—10 percent or more—and that most of the land must transfer to complete Palestinian control.

Netanyahu said afterward he had not given Clinton a specific figure, but that "the Americans have a clear picture of what we can do," and made plain that it is less than what Clinton seeks. Albright, leaving an afternoon session with Netanyahu to brief reporters, said, "The president laid out some of his ideas to bridge the gaps which still exist. And what you see now is a work in progress."

Before entering substantive discussions, administration officials said, Clinton and Netanyahu spent some time clearing the air about their own relationship. While Netanyahu has complained that he was being snubbed by Clinton, who refused to meet with him on an earlier visit this winter, Clinton noted that the irritations run in both directions. He chided Netanyahu for meeting with television evangelist Jerry Falwell—whom Clinton noted has distributed political videos hinting darkly that Clinton may have been complicit in a murder.

The two shared a laugh over their mutual grievances, according to a senior administration official. But that was not the only pointed moment.

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A crime out of a storybook Brutal killings in Amman leave many questions unanswered

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer

INVESTIGATORS HAVE succeeded in narrowing down the circle of the identities of the masked attackers who murdered five influential Iraqis and three Egyptians in cold blood.

The Saturday night killings took place at the white-stone mansion of Iraqi businessman

Sami George Thomas in the western Amman suburb of Rabiye.

The attackers barged into the hilltop villa, using knives, they first tortured the owner, Mr Thomas, and then his dinner guests, the corpses were later scattered around the villa.

What made the Saturday night massacre even more shocking to the authorities and

the public was that one of the victims was Hekmat Al Hejju, Iraq's No. 2 resident diplomat in Jordan.

The authorities later found the two cars used by the killers to escape the scene of the crime, one of them belonged to the late Hejju.

Only one survived the hatchlings: Ms Diotsios Lidaki, 37, believed to be a Greek cook and a close friend of the Mr Thomas, who is 60 years of age. The crime was like out of a story book, Ms Lidaki was one of the last to be hatched. However, after the stabbing they thought she was dead and left her. After the killers left the house, she managed to reach for the phone and contacted the Civil Defence, who in turn alerted the police.

Recovering from hospital, she said that Mr Al Hejju was lured to the villa. The diplomat had been at the residence of the Iraqi ambassador. He and his wife were invited for iftar, and left late to their house. As he was parking his car into the garage, he received a call on his mobile and asked him to make his way to Mr Thomas's house. Al Hejju parked outside the villa, left his wife in the car and entered the house, where he was immediately slain.

When all the slaughtering was done, and just as the killers

were preparing to leave, they noticed a car parked outside with the diplomat's wife in it. Again, they lured her into the house and killed her.

Each of the victims had more than a dozen wounds, indicating that the killings were slow and ruthless. One observer said the slayings—which police, acting on a tip, discovered about midnight—amounted to a "very professional" assassination.

No suspects were arrested till now, but the lone survivor of the attack, reportedly said she heard the killers speaking Arabic with a distinctive Iraqi accent.

The four or five masked intruders, Ms Lidaki said, entered the villa after guests had gathered for the iftar meal Saturday to break the daily Ramadan fast.

Jordanian officials sealed borders to question any Iraqi found trying to leave the country. Press reports said that the authorities prevented four Iraqi diplomats from leaving the country. The authorities launched a massive campaign of investigations of all Iraqis who entered the country during the past 30 days.

The Forensic Medicine Center handled the bodies of the victims and diplomats at the

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Nation ponders effects of Abbadi's statement on national unity

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer

THE GOVERNMENT'S win of a majority support for its 1998 draft budget law, 99 for 14 against, after a week-long session dominated by lengthy and often monotonous speeches by lawmakers, was marred by one particular deputy: Ahmad Owedi Al Abbadi. After lambasting the government, accusing cabinet members of corruption, sleaze and nepotism, Abbadi then opened his heavy guns at one section of the society: Jordanians of Palestinian origin.

He reserved his strongest attack to three cabinet members in particular: Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutaweh. All three are of Palestinian origin.

The 45-minute speech, carried live on JTV, stunned deputies, ministers and the entire nation. Here was one of the most notorious Jordanian ultra-nationalists directing his strongest attack yet against a majority of the Jordanian people accusing them, among others, of dual loyalty.

Ahadi, who gave the government his vote of confidence two months earlier, demanded that the government clean up its ranks from



Abbadi

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Clinton deposed in Jones lawsuit over sexual harassment

By William Douglas

WASHINGTON—President Clinton faced Paula Corbin Jones Saturday, and for six hours answered lawyers' questions about her accusations that he sexually harassed her seven years ago. Clinton, Jones and their attorneys met for a pretrial deposition in her civil lawsuit in an 11th-floor conference room at the office of the president's lawyer, Robert Bennett, about two blocks from the White House.

The meeting marks the first time that a sitting president has had to give sworn testimony as a defendant in a lawsuit. Clinton arrived in a presidential limousine that avoided hordes of reporters and camera crews by going into an underground parking garage. Jones and her entourage, which included her lawyers, husband and media adviser, got out of a taxi and entered the rear of the building.

Dressed in a maize jumpsuit, Jones had to fight her way through a crush of more than 30 television cameras, 20 photographers and tourists. She did not speak as she entered the building. The presiding judge in the case, US District Court Judge Susan Webber Wright of Arkansas, who attended the deposition in person, has placed all parties in the suit under a gag order. But Susan Carpenter-McMillan, Jones' adviser, said her client "feels great, she's not

nervous and she slept well."

"This is a proud day to be an American, that's exactly one thing she said to me," Carpenter-McMillan said. "I feel proud to be an American, to know that the judicial system works, to know that a little girl from Arkansas is equal

**World
Report**



Paula Jones



Bill Clinton

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Herbal medicine

Did you know it has so many benefits!

Continued from page 1

Established in 1990 by the Al Bittar family, Systema uses all herbs approved by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health in Jordan. Also it is the first company in Jordan and the Middle East to specialize in producing various organic materials using modern and advanced technology.

It is worth mentioning that in dealing with natural herbs, the cure may be found in the plant's leaves, or in its seeds, fruits or even in the roots. Herbs could be taken, after being dried, in the form of a drink, ointment, vapour or cream.

But the usage of natural herbs is not new. In a book titled *Herbal Treatment*, Dr Ameen Roweihia points out that the "quinine" drug which was extracted from the crust of Cinchona tree has been discovered as a cure for malaria in 1630.

Dr Roweihia also writes that the Pharaohs' papyrus manuscripts on ways of herbal treatment.

Ancient Indians and Egyptians even had their own prescriptions of the use of natural herbs. It was then passed to the Greeks who wrote many books on herbal treatment in the fourth and fifth centuries BC. Of course every body knows the famous Greek Hippocrates



Khamis Al Bittar

and Gallinus.

After that it was the Arab and Muslim physicians who took the herbal treatment and added to it. Ibn Sina, Al Razi and Ibn Al Bittar are but few among the many Arab specialists in this field.

Interestingly enough, Dr Roweihia says that the first time he discovered



Maria Al Bittar

the benefits of natural herbs as a medicine was when he was in jail. He became aware of that while he was sitting in the garden of the prison, a dog was moving from one plant to another as if looking for something. But, after smelling a certain plant, the animal ate some of its blossoms and went away.

Knowing that a dog is an animal

which never eats plants, Dr Roweihia took the plant to an experienced farmer. He discovered that the blossoms of that plant are poisonous, and if taken by mouth, they may cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

So the animal, by instinct, had discovered a cure for its pains. Generally speaking, experts in natural herbs stress that it's better to be selective in taking food to avoid the so many diseases.

Vegetarians are said to be the luckiest as they live longer and suffer less. Latest studies suggest, eating too much animal food (meat) makes human beings' lives shorter.

"Vegetarian food is the key element to good health and it minimizes about 70 percent to 90 percent of venereal diseases," Al Bittar says.

He adds that lack of vitamins especially E and A or minerals from the body could be the main factors for cancer. "So we recommend that everyone takes everyday 500 grams of vegetables (or salad) and at least 150 grams of fruit." If no fruit is available, one can eat carrots or even tomatoes that are rich in vitamins.

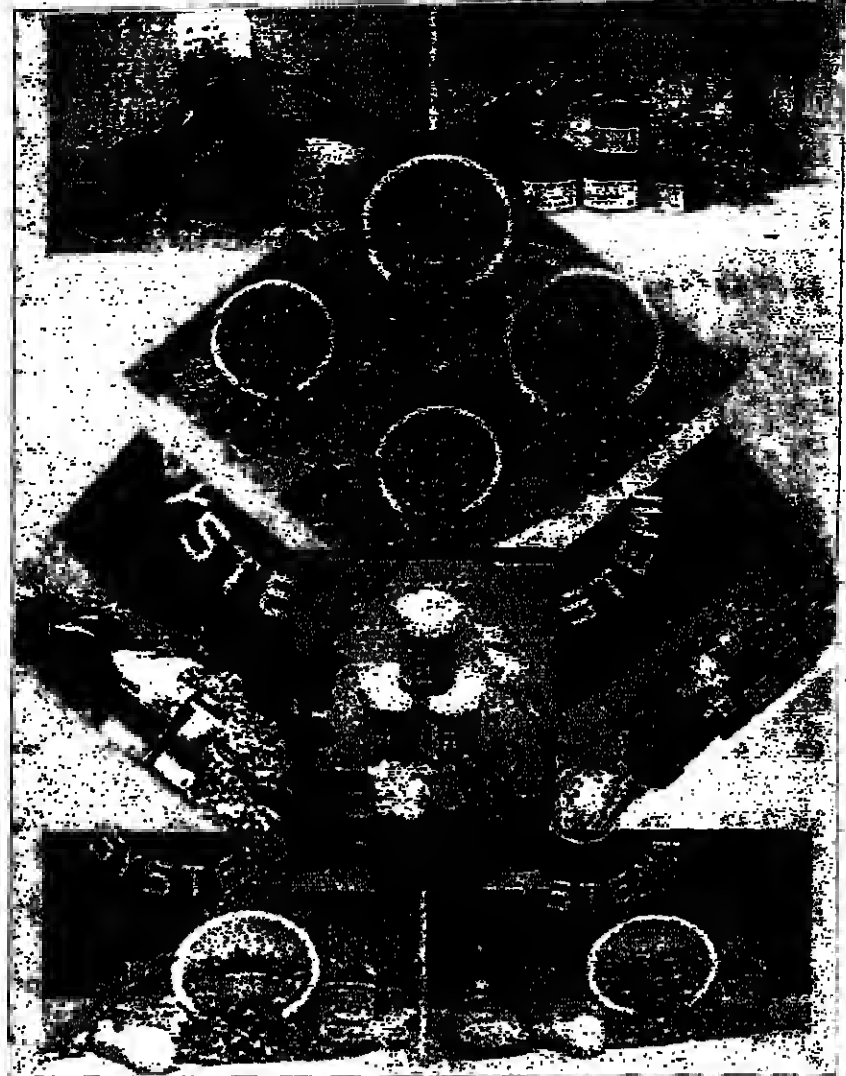
Herbs specialists advise that if you take two or three apples a day you'll never be sick and your teeth will be cleansed. An English proverb says "One apple a day keeps the doctor away." Doctors may dislike it but it is true.

It nourishes and cures. An apple contains 26 chemical elements and there are about 5000 kinds of apples.

Apples are rich in vitamins A, B, and C, sodium, calcium, potassium and iron minerals. Containing "pectin", it helps to organize the absorption of fats in the body and reduces cholesterol, so it has a positive effect in avoiding cancer.

Some studies say that it revives the brain and the heart and is useful for those infected with diabetes and high blood pressure.

Onions are also seen as a complete nutrition that prevents many diseases, for example they contain the Glukonin element which functions as the insulin in stabilizing sugar in the



blood. Onions juice is effective and kills germs, prevents hair fall, revives the blood circulation and the heart, relaxes the body and nerves, among others. But do people believe that one onion could contain such beneficial elements?

Going back to Systema it would be unfair to name its products which include over 50 herbal medicines for cough, stomach ache, chronic headache, muscles, and skin diseases. One of its major products is a cream made by Mrs Bittar, who is originally from Greece. "This cream is made from chamomile, jojoba, parsley and other

herbs, and I advise ladies to use it to protect and nourish their skin."

However, the well-known specialist points out that, treatment by natural herbs takes a long time, it could reach up to a year with some cases such as impetigo, vitiligo and psoriasis.

He warns that self-treatment with herbs without consulting a specialist could be risky. As any kind of drugs, herbs possess a wide variety of benefits and harms depending the particular herb and the body's deficiency. Some herbs contain esthetic properties, and some contain poisonous elements that could be life threatening.

Clinton fails to push Netanyahu on West Bank redeployment

Continued from page 1

Netanyahu did not protest a US-orchestrated visit that Arafat will pay this week to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. He did present Clinton with a stack of images from Arab newspapers with gross caricatures of Jews and Israelis. "Look, this cartoon presents the Jews exactly the way Der Sturmer used to," Netanyahu told Clinton, according to an Israeli account, a reference to the Nazi newspaper of the Third Reich.

Arafat said in Paris Tuesday that he will accept an

offer for a VIP tour of the museum, despite the fact that some officials of the memorial initially tried to prevent him from attending. At the morning meeting in the Oval Office, most of the business was conducted two on two, with Clinton and Albright facing Netanyahu and his cabinet secretary, Dani Naveh.

The Israeli cabinet last week passed a stern but vaguely worded motion insisting that there would be no further Israeli withdrawal until five months after Palestinians completed a long list of such security measures, but Netanyahu told Clinton there

is "wiggle room" in that position.

In a briefing for the Israeli press, Netanyahu said "it's not a secret we're looking for a package deal," adding that it is now "possible we'll do it gradually and in parallel." In his meeting with Clinton, Netanyahu highlighted the importance of changes in the Palestinian National Covenant, which adviser David Bar Ilan said "has to do with fighting terror because what the covenant calls for is the destruction of Israel."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Brutal killings in Amman leave many questions unanswered

Continued from page 1

Iraqi Embassy in Amman later received the body of Hejlu which was taken back to Baghdad, Wednesday.

The attack was the second assault on an Iraqi diplomat in Jordan this year, and the Iraqi Foreign Ministry in Baghdad was the first to announce that it had taken place, labeling it Sunday a "cowardly and treacherous act."

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali also condemned the killings "for whatever reason and whatever motives," calling them "an assault on the safety and security of the nation."

Several theories circulated, one was that the slayings could have been a strike against the Iraqi regime by Iraqi opposition groups which has a strong base in Amman.

But by late Sunday, police and Iraqi exile sources in

Amman were suggesting that the motive for the killings was most likely criminal—that it was a gangland-style attack rooted in a dispute over money.

Another scenario says that these businessmen might have been acting as fronts for the Iraqi regime abroad, and they may have shortchanged Baghdad on a deal or two, and then eliminated for failing to keep in touch.

One of the victims, Nemir Oji, was identified as a member of a millionaire Iraqi family whose financial empire in Europe and North Africa has murky origins and has been reputed over the years to have been used as a front for assets of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his son Uday.

The late Thomas was also believed to be involved in business deals for the interest of the Iraqi ruling family for at least a decade. Sources also

said that Mr Thomas enjoys good ties with the Iraqi opposition, particularly the London-based Iraqi National Accord (INA), the wealthy anti-Iraqi regime opposition.

While the third scenario talks about mafia involvement in the killings, since the late Thomas enjoys a wide international business network. At the scene of the crime, police seized a number of documents including accounts in Swiss banks and papers about business deals.

Thomas also enjoys good relations with Jordanian businessmen. Some press reports even said that the Iraqi businessman had up to \$100 million of investments in Jordan.

Sources of the self-exiled Iraqi opposition said they suspected that Oji, a food exporter, and the others were "liquidated" because of a falling-out with Baghdad over

whether they had been sending back a fair share of profits, and that the killings could have been "a message" to other business operatives not to shortchange their patrons in the Iraqi leadership.

The Iraqi Embassy in Amman, said it believed the killing of Al Hejlu and the other seven was "politically motivated." Hejlu, who had been assigned to Jordan for four years, was the embassy's charge d'affaires.

Members of the INA in Amman vehemently denied that anyone from their organization had any role in the killings. "The Iraqi opposition does not use these means," said a spokesman of the organization. "Such means are Saddam's, not the opposition's."

In an oddly timed surprise, Hussein decreed Sunday that all Jordanians currently held in Iraqi prisons or awaiting

trial would be freed immediately.

Iraqi-Jordanian relations have been frayed since December, when Iraq hanged four Jordanian citizens who had been arrested for petty smuggling—despite a series of high-level appeals for clemency— from Jordan's government.

According to the Iraqi News Agency, Hussein decided to free about 66 Jordanian prisoners, as a goodwill gesture after a two-hour meeting Sunday with a pro-Iraqi Jordanian opposition politician, Laith Shebeilat. He ordered the prisoners to drive out in a convoy behind Shebeilat to Amman.

Among the dead were Hejlu's wife, an Egyptian citizen and the Egyptian guard of the villa and his friend.

A little over two weeks ago, Rahim Taher, the commercial attaché at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, escaped injury after being fired on from a passing car outside his home. Jordanian authorities have since implicated six Iraqis in the January attack, which they have blamed on a personal vendetta.

An Open Day Sale at the National Music Conservatory

THE NATIONAL Music Conservatory (NMC) Noor Al Hussein Foundation is organizing an open day for sale of wide selection of student instruments, woodwind instruments, brass instruments, string instruments, instrument accessories, cassettes, compact discs and music publications (among which those required for the examinations of the Associated Board of Royal Schools of Music).

The sale offers attractive packages as well as reduced prices on stock musical commodities put on display. The sale which will take place at the NMC, will be open to the public on Friday 23 January from 10 am to 4 pm and from 7 pm to 10 pm.

Fastlink files suit against government

THE SOLE mobile telephone company, Jordan Mobile Telephone Services Co., (Fastlink) has filed a case against the government because of its decision last October to offer a license for a second cellular network for the Jordan Telecommunications Company.

The case which was filed last December is now awaiting a decision by the High Court. The first session concerning the case will be convened on 24 of this month. Fastlink, which fears losing monopoly over the mobile services in the Kingdom since 1994, claims that it will lose a year of the contract signed with the JTC because of the Cabinet's decision which was taken before October, 1998.

Nation ponders effects of Abbadi's statement on national unity

Continued from page 1

those ministers, and others whom he called "enemies of the state." He also attacked the head of the General Intelligence Department, Lt. General Sameeh Batekhi.

By the end of Abbadi's speech, public focus has shifted from the budget to national unity. But the government was not about to sit and do nothing. In a new precedence, the official spokesman, who himself fell victim to Abbadi's harangue, snubbed the extremist deputy and underlined the need for national unity. The government criticized the deputy's speech and described it as "harmful to national unity."

It strongly criticized Abbadi's verbal assault on the three key ministers and accused Abbadi of opening

the door to "the danger of fanaticism."

On his part, Abbadi, who won his Lower House seat for the Amman Fifth District, reacted angrily to the government's statement and rejected accusations buried against him. "I did not harm national unity. I was referring to the struggle between classes, between rich and poor," he told *The Star*. "I was not talking about Jordanian-Palestinian relations."

He added that the official statement carried a "clear threat" to him.

Still, the government could not afford to let Abbadi get away with it. Prime Minister Abdel Salam Al Majali dedicated a good part of his reply to the deputies' speeches Monday to cutting down Abbadi's accusations and insinuations.

Majali defended the integrity of his cabinet members. "I am proud of them and of their achievements," he said. He then lashed out at Abbadi without naming him. "Talk about fanaticism and discrimination under the cover of honesty is something that is rejected by us." He called on those accusing his government of corruption and wavering documents proving such charges to follow legal means and not to terrorize public employees.

Abbadi's attack against what many perceived as the Jordanians of Palestinian roots, created a state of shock in the country. This was not the first time that the

eccentric deputy had raised questions about the legitimacy of the Jordanian citizenship and nationality of Palestinians residing in Jordan for decades.

But what was dangerous about his latest assault is that he was becoming more daring, direct and could be appealing to a small group of people who share his ideas.

"I never wasted time listening to Parliamentary debates, but Abbadi's statement glued me to my seat because I know his ideas," said As'ad Heshmeh, a teller at a mail store in Amman. "He [Abbadi] has abnormal ideas, somebody should stop him. He has been chopping the country's body into pieces for the past seven years or more."

However, others believe that Abbadi represents a rising trend in the country that does not want the Palestinian solution to be at the expense of Jordan. "Abbadi was elected by a constituency which adopted his famous views concerning the Palestinian presence in Jordan," said Maha, a school teacher, who preferred to keep her family's name anonymous. "You could feel it and see it in many places. So I am not surprised to hear him say what he said."

In a new development, press reports said Minister of Planning Dr Khalaf is planning to file a legal case against Abbadi.

Abbadi attacked Khalaf in his Lower House speech


accusing her policies of "destroying the country's national institutions."

Most deputies were also miffed by Abbadi's speech, but many, including Speaker of the House, criticized the government's statement which they considered as a direct interference in their affairs.

During the Sunday's session of the budget discussions, conflict between the government and the House flared again, when deputy Khalil Attieh asked Deputy Prime Minister Abdallah Nsour to confirm that Abbadi's speech was seen beforehand by a minister who appreciated its content. Attieh's question sparked the anger of Nsour who strongly denied such claims and replied on behalf of the minister, by saying the deputies' words "is an insult to the minister." Pointing to the podium where deputies deliver their speeches Nsour said "this podium has been misused." He threatened to send these accusations to court. He added anyone uses the podium should respect national unity.

In a surprising move Abbadi's own tribe released a statement criticizing his speech, and national unity.

Earlier in the week, four Lower House deputies, including Abbadi released a statement underlining the sanctity of national unity. Abbadi voted for the budget draft law.



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JORDAN

WEEK



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Jordanian prisoners freed

Jordanian prisoners held in Iraqi jails were released Wednesday, following a decision by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Iraq said on Sunday it would release all Jordanian prisoners in its jails and immediately halt legal proceedings against Jordanians in its courts. The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said President Saddam Hussein ordered their release after a meeting with a leading Jordanian opposition figure, Leith Shubaitat, who is also the President of Jordan Engineers Association. The government had already been working on the release of the Jordanian prisoners. The numbers are conflicting, but it is thought that up to 100 Jordanian prisoners were held in Iraqi jails.

SSC taken to court

Journalist Nashed Hattar, who is the publisher of *Al Mithaq* which could be back in print soon, has instructed his lawyer to file a case in the High Court against the Social Security Corporation. This is concerning the SSC's latest decision to invest JD 1.5 million in a Jordanian-Israeli company. Hattar's lawyer, Faisal Al Batayneh, argues such participation goes against Jordanian laws and is nothing but the use of "Jordanian finance to service the economy of the Zionist enemy," and help the policies of normalization.

Garaudy in our minds

The trial of Roger Garaudy continues to arouse much interest in Jordan, especially amongst intellectuals, politicians, academics and journalists. For one thing the Jordan Writers Association has sent a letter to French President Jacques Chirac telling him that an injustice is being done to the French philosopher and that the trial should be ended. Meanwhile, the 12 opposition parties are also up in arms. They called on rich Arabs and Muslims all over the world to provide financial back up to Garaudy and demanded that the Union of Arab Lawyers send a delegation to defend him.

Work in Mafrak

It's working conditions in Mafrak this week. The Labor Directorate in the Mafrak Governorate issued 176 warnings to employers who were believed to be in direct contraventions of the labor laws during 1997. Also 167 violations were issued to establishments in the area for not sticking to the full limits of the law. The Directorate issued 7167 work permits and gave 339 work experience certificates.

Deputies walk out

It is still the hammer and the chop for Lower House deputies Hamadah Farahneh and Sheikh Mohammad Rafat. This time it is from deputies themselves, and it happened during one of the sessions on the budget last week. As Farahneh got up to talk about the budget, 15 deputies left the chamber. They still feel angry about his visit to the Knesset last month.

Commission increase for fuel distributors

It seems that the dispute between the fuel distributors, the owners of stations that sell fuel, and the government is slowly reaching a satisfactory end. Deputy Prime Minister for Development Dr Jawad Al Anani said the principle has been accepted by the government to increase the commission of fuel distributors. However talk now is centered at the level of such a commission. Distributors are demanding a five percent increase on street sales, they are now taking just one percent. Rumor has it that the government is playing with the idea of sharing the increase with the consumer. Happy relationship!

Strike!

Private schools could be in for a shock on 25 January. President of the Union of Teachers in Private Education Mazen Al Maalitha has already sent a memo to Labor Minister Dr Saleh Al Khasawneh informing him that there will be a work stoppage on 25 January in protest of the unfair practices carried out by one of the private schools against its employees. The memo pointed out that the Union has on a number of occasions pleaded with the Ministry of Education to take over the responsibility of negotiating directly with private schools over their members' wages and contracts but to no avail. The memo said that despite the beginning of the year, teachers in a number of schools are still waiting for their last years' salaries.

AIDS patients

The Higher National Committee for Combating AIDS is exempting AIDS patients from paying fees for medical treatment at government hospitals. This exemption relates to diseases other than AIDS. This is a new directive taken by the Ministry of Health. There are 164 AIDS patients in Jordan.

GAM coffers

Total revenues collected by the Greater Amman Municipality for 1997 hit more than JD 13 million, while salaries and wages were only JD 5 million. GAM is embarking on further extensive plans to beautify Amman for this year.

British Airways holds Ramadan evening for travel agents



THE BRITISH Airways team in Amman mingled with 180 travel agents at the Regency Hotel this week.

The evening was held in a traditional Ramadan Nights setting with guests enjoying the Holy Mooth's famous drinks, bubbly bubbly, and card games.

This event was held by British Airways in Amman to strengthen the ties between the Airlines team and the travel agents in an informal setting that would allow an exchange of ideas on how to better serve the Jordanian customers and their needs, and provide them with the best service that has become customary of "The World's Favourite Airline."



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan holds an Iftar banquet in Muata University for the chancellors and lecturers of Jordanian universities, Tuesday. Prince Hassan called on universities in the Kingdom to draw up scientific plans that could be executed within the context of their role in the service and development of the northern, middle and southern regions. He urged universities of those regions to draw up strategies that would be helpful for the national economic and social development.

Greek Ambassador in Amman

'...Greece can serve as the bridge between the Middle East and Europe'

EDITOR'S NOTE: The peace process, Greek-Jordanian relations and the Greek role in Europe and the Mediterranean are the main topics of this week's interview. Aida Al Tawil talks to the Greek Ambassador, Mr. Aristidis Sandis, in Amman both for *The Star* and *Ad Dustour*. Excerpts follow.

Do you think that Greece has a more concerned role towards the peace process than its European partners? Can you give details on the Greek policy towards the peace process?

Being a member of the European Union, Greece can serve as the bridge between the Middle East and Europe. In this context, it has been able to take initiatives and contributed considerably in the formation of the European policy in this part of the world. Traditionally it has been active in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Arab-Israeli conflict has had a considerable impact on Greek foreign policy. My country has always been at the forefront in assisting the Arab cause and to particularly the Palestinians. We firmly support a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. We call for unchanged religious conditions and the preservation of the Holy Shrines in Jerusalem. The political dimensions should be solved through negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel. We also support the idea for preserving Jerusalem as an open city for all religions and as a symbol of peace. Greece has longstanding economic, political and cultural ties with both Arabs and Israelis, while large Orthodox Christian communities are to be found in the Middle East, where the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch are located. Nor does the Middle East, crisis leave unaffected developments in Cyprus. In this respect, Greece has a vital stake in the establishment of peace, stability and cooperative relations in the wider Middle East region. The credibility of Greece as a champion of stability and cooperation is further reinforced by its long tradition as a country which promotes the principle of peaceful resolution of international conflicts. Finally, I would also like to stress that it was Greece that took the initiative to promote the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

What is the present state of Greek-Turkish relations? Greece has demonstrated a willingness to settle through peaceful means a number of complex issues affecting Greek-Turkish relations. Even when faced with a series of Turkish claims against Greek territory and sovereign rights in the Aegean area in defiance of international legality and treaties, in an attempt to change the existing status quo, Greece has shown restraint and has repeatedly advocated compliance to the relevant principles of international law. To achieve a normalization of Greek-Turkish relations, the Greek government has put forward a comprehensive proposal of a "step by step" procedure, aiming at the gradual elimination of the areas of conflict and the promotion of a climate of confidence

between Jordan and Greece between the Arab Nation and Hellenism, since we share the same devotion in human values and the same goals. For we are both striving for peace, stability, security, regional cooperation and economic and social development in our respective areas of the world. And in this context I would like to stress that we in Greece highly value and fully support the stabilizing rule of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the crossroads of the Middle East.

An important role in our efforts to broaden and deepen the bilateral relations is played by the Jordanian-Greek Friendship Associations under the Chairmanship of His Excellency Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali as well as by the "Association of Greek Women in Jordan" and by the "Association of Jordanian Graduates of Greek Universities." In fact, a large number of Jordanians have made their university studies in Greece, many of them with scholarships from the Greek state. In addition, military personnel of the Jordanian armed forces are granted regularly scholarships for studies in the Military Academy of Greece. To conclude, I want to emphasize the great importance of the Greek Orthodox Church in strengthening the ties between our two peoples.

How does the Cyprus issue affect Greek-Turkish relations? The Cyprus question is not a Greek-Turkish issue but an international problem of invasion and occupation. It is imperative that the International Community, the US and the EU exert all their influence to make Turkey comply with international legal order. Although separate and unrelated to the Greek-Turkish

issues, a just, viable and functional solution to the Cyprus problem would greatly contribute to the improvement in Greek-Turkish relations. However, the normalization on the Greek-Turkish front would be unattainable as long as the Cyprus issue remains open. The accession perspective of Cyprus and the increasing interest of the EU member-states on the Cyprus question has given to this thorny problem a new dimension. We strongly believe that the accession of Cyprus can act as a catalyst in the effort to find a just and viable solution to the Cyprus question. The accession of Cyprus will contribute to the economic growth of the island and will reinforce the sense of security of its population. This would be particularly so in the case of the economically weaker Turkish Cypriot community. On the other hand, we do not consider that the settlement of the political question constitutes a precondition for the accession of Cyprus to the EU. Cyprus accession to the EU coupled with a comprehensive plan for the demilitarization of the island will go a long way to the resolution of the Cyprus problem, guaranteeing peace and prosperity to all the citizens of the Republic.



Sandis

Clinton deposed in Jones lawsuit over sexual harassment

Continued from page 1

under the law to the president of the United States. Clinton was the first to leave, his motorcade speeding out of the underground garage. Carpenter-McMillan came out and said Jones probably would speak to the media, but moments later a three-taxi motorcade containing Jones roared out of the garage, as well, with photographers running in pursuit.

Jones filed a lawsuit nearly four years ago asserting that Clinton exposed himself to her and asked her for oral sex in a Little Rock, hotel room on May 8, 1991, while he was governor of Arkansas and she was a state employee. Her lawsuit contended that Clinton conspired with a state trooper to entice her into a sexual situation. Jones, now 31, was a low-level Arkansas government employee work-

ing at a state-sponsored conference on the day she says the incident occurred.

Clinton has stated in court papers that he has no memory of ever meeting Jones. While House officials said Clinton planned to repeat that assertion, Saturday's deposition was in preparation for a trial scheduled to take place in Little Rock on May 27. The rules of evidence are more free-wheeling for depositions than for trials, and Clinton may have faced questions about his sexual history.

Sources familiar with the case, however, say Webster directed Jones attorney Donovan Campbell to focus his questions on what allegedly happened between the president and his client.

The case has been a test of the images of both combatants. For Clinton, the lawsuit has pro-

vided his critics ammunition to attack his character. Jones' character and appearance have been placed under a microscope. Her critics wonder why she waited years before filing the suit and why her legal team upped the price of an out-of-court settlement to \$2 million and an apology from Clinton. She had originally sued for \$700,000.

Clinton's partisans have tried to portray Jones as a low-class gold-digger. To defend against that characterization, Jones has undergone a dramatic makeover, toning down her hairstyle, wardrobe and makeup. Her hairstylist, Daniel DiCrisio of Los Angeles, accompanied her to Washington.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

P C

Garaudy in the press

The on-going trial of the French philosopher Roger Garaudy in Paris this week is getting more coverage especially by newspaper columnists.

He is standing trial in France under the 1991 Gayssaud Law which was imposed by the Jewish communities to repress those who dare refute the Zionist claims about the Holocaust, and to put an end to a rising phenomena adopted by some European intellectuals who started preparation to search for the truth about Nazi gas chambers during the World War II.

The trial of the 83-year-old man which is having much media publicity in France and the world, is received with much anguish in the Arab world and particularly in Jordan.

Indeed, after a slow start, Jordanian columnist this week appeared ready for a full frontal attack. They say that Garaudy is a victim of a conspiracy perpetrated by the Zionists elements in France, Europe and the United States.

Yasser Al Za'atari writing in *Ad Dustour* says that what the trial shows is that the strength of the Jewish communities and the Zionists lobbies that are taking much more than the fair share of the cake for their political, economic and cultural dominance.

Garaudy, who converted to Islam, is the author of the *Founding Myths of the Israeli Politics*, unveils, among other things what he describes as Jewish lies about the Holocaust.

George Haddad writing in *Ad Dustour* at the beginning of the trial says that despite the fact that Garaudy's book was a scientific and an academic study—and in this respect contained little that is new—it was received with such vehemence by the Zionists. The myths came to be seen as "doctrines to justify Israeli practices in Palestine."

The book moved the Jewish communities around the globe, as it rane a bell awakening the world on how Zionism exploited a historical lie, called Holocaust, to gain international sympathy for the Jews, which later helped gather them in what they claimed to be the "promised land" in Palestine.

In Jordan as the rest of the Muslim and Arab world, the Muslim philosopher receives a massive support, and many intellectuals have expressed their doubts about French democracy that bans Garaudy from expressing his opinion.

Haddad says that in reality Garaudy's book is one of two important books published in the last few years to expose what he regards as a lie about the six million Jews killed. The second book which is more dangerous is by the humanist professor Israel Shahak which also exposes Israel myths.

Huda Fakhuri also in *Ad Dustour* adopts a more pan-Islamic angle. Firstly she says that the trial of Garaudy coincided with the banning of the Welfare Party in Turkey. She points out to the double standards that has been adopted by the West. She says that in the case of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, the West said that the Indo-British author must be allowed in practice his right to free expression despite the fact that the book was extremely anti-Islamic.

But she says that the same West is putting on trial a writer, who is of Jewish origin but who has chosen Islam, because he dared criticize Zionist thought in his book. Fakhuri asks how can this liberal, democratic West allow itself to hunt a writer to criticize what he feels should be criticized.

The contradiction is apparent, the next columnist writes, Shuhla Al Kayali in *Al Rai* says Salman Rushdie fought against Islam and Muslims openly, but to the West he became a "symbol of science, culture and knowledge." The writer starts his column in a form of a letter to Garaudy. Al Kayali tells Garaudy that "you are the light standing in a courtroom that has been folded in darkness for so many years." She adds that Garaudy's book has come to expose the myths and lies which international Zionism has tried to feed the world with for the last 50 years. Al Kayali says that how can we believe that six million Jews were sent to the gas chambers when the total number of Jews around the world at the time was no more than four million.

Jordan to publish first human development report

AMMAN—As part of its commitment to promote sustainable human development and improve living standards, the Government has approved plans to publish a National Human Development Report in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The project agreement was officially signed by Ministry of Planning Secretary-General, Dr. Nabil Ammari, and UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Jorgen Lissner. The total production cost of three successive reports for the years 1998 to 2000 is estimated at \$225,000 which will be jointly financed by UNDP and the British Department for International Development. The first report is expected to be published in the fall of 1998.

Since 1990, UNDP's global Human Development Report has closely examined whether economic growth managed to translate into tangible improvements in people's quality of life. Every year, it ranks 174 countries around the world according to the Human Development Index (HDI) which is based on three socio-economic indicators: life expectancy, literacy and per capita gross domestic product. Last year, Jordan ranked 84, placing it in the "medium human development" category.

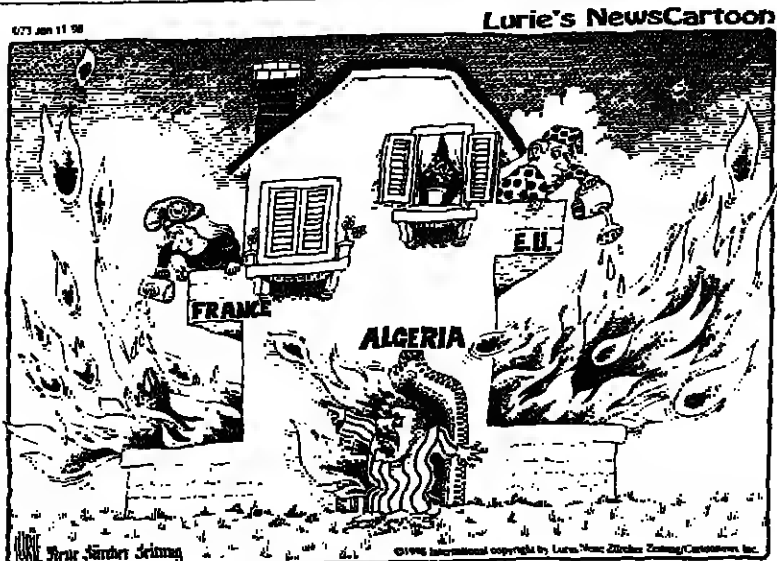
Like the global Human Development Report, Jordan's National Human Development Report will place emphasis on people-centered development, highlighting a range of socio-economic factors that affect positively and negatively—Jordan's HDI ranking in the global report. The national report is expected to convey a more elaborate picture of human development in Jordan, using the latest statistics and in-depth analysis.

One of the outstanding features of the first edition of Jordan's National Human Development Report will be its special focus on youth. This theme was selected because adolescents and young adults comprise a large segment of Jordanian society, with nearly 40 percent of the population falling in the 15-34 age group. In addition, the role and problems of youth in society have not received enough attention compared to other issues such as unemployment, poverty, environmental conservation or the advancement of women.

More than 60 countries around the world have embarked on projects to produce a National Human Development Report. In the Arab region, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Tunisia have already published similar national reports.

THE STAR ONLINE

<http://www.arabia.com/star>



Stop soaking my apartment!
(From: Many hundreds of people were killed and injured in Algeria during the last two weeks alone, yet the government continues to meet offers of assistance from France and other European countries calling them "terrorism in its original form".)

Our Say...

Exorcising demons and hunting scarecrows

JORDANIANS FROM all walks of life felt insulted by the words of deputy Ahmad Oweidi Abbadi last week, who once more cast a shadow of doubt over the loyalty of Jordanians of Palestinian origin, especially those in senior political and economic positions in the Kingdom.

They felt insulted not because Abbadi was threatening national unity, Jordan's most treasured legacy of the last few decades. They felt so, probably, because Abbadi was claiming to talk on behalf of the Jordanian people. He was definitely not. If anything, Abbadi was speaking loudly, trying to be heard because he knows he has few followers.

Abbadi was elected to the Lower House twice since the resumption of Jordan's democratic process in 1989. During his first term he expressed his ultra-nationalist positions and was many times criticized for his extremist and divisive stands. He lost his seat in the 1993 race and four years later successfully contested the elections of 1997 to win for the second time. It is said that those who elected him the second time were fully aware of his extremist and chauvinistic ideas and therefore, by speaking the way he did from the podium a week ago, Abbadi was appealing to the constituency which elected him.

That might be partly true. People elect deputies on the basis of kinship, tribal affiliation and clan rivalries. They elect those who can do them favors; appoint relatives in government offices and so forth. It would be giving Abbadi too much credit to say that he represents an organized trend and that he is following a certain political agenda. He may be following his own personal agenda, which may not go beyond securing a minister's portfolio in the upcoming cabinet reshuffle. Or he may be being used by others who do indeed have their own ominous political agenda. We sincerely hope not.

It is not Abbadi who scares us and appears to threaten our national unity. What scares us the most is our growing lack of self-confidence in our system and the covenant that we all vowed to respect and protect. We should exorcise the demons within us instead of hunting down scarecrows.

The subject of the dual loyalty of Jordanians of Palestinian origin and the earned and sacred rights of those people as full-fledged citizens of this country has always been a sort of Pandora's Box for the government. It should not be. By our silence we give credence to those who fish in murky waters looking for a catch—any catch.

National unity cannot be protected like an old relic that is believed to have a supernatural effect. On the contrary, national unity is something we feel around us, sense everywhere and anytime and appreciate so that no one would dare threaten it. ■



● A rally in support of Roger Garuady in Gaza, Monday. Palestinian intellectuals and academics took part in the rally to show support for the French Muslim, who is currently on trial in Paris. Palestinian Telecommunications Minister Imad Fallouji said "we ask all believers in human rights and freedom of expression to back him."

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Notes from the Levant

Mass murder in Amman: Jordan feels the brunt of its special relation with Iraq

By Osama El-Sherif

THE GRISLY murder of six Iraqis and two Egyptians in a posh villa in an Amman suburb this week raises a good question. How easily has it become for Jordan to maintain the "special" relationship it has with Iraq? The latest slaughter has shocked Jordanians. This was no ordinary murder and the victims were anything but ordinary people. They included influential Iraqi businessmen and a senior diplomat, the embassy's charge d'affaires, and his wife. The perpetrators, as far as the official investigations have uncovered, were professional killers who have planned and carried their cold-blooded crime carefully.

And although initial investigation results have disqualified political motives, when it comes to Iraq, as Jordanians are finding out, political symbolism cannot be discounted. But for Jordan, proving that the murders were not politically motivated is especially important. Only three weeks ago, the Iraqi commercial attaché in Jordan narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in the streets of Amman. While the Iraqis charged that the attempt was political, the Jordanian government has so far proved it was not. It says the Iraqi diplomat was a victim of a family feud that involved his mother-in-law.

Although no connection between this week's mass murder and the earlier attempt on the diplomat's life has been established, Jordanians are growing increasingly anxious about the prospect of Iraqis hatching themselves in the Jordanian capital.

These incidents cannot be treated in isolation from the current tension that marks the special relations between Jordan and Iraq.

Late last year Jordanians were outraged when Iraq executed four of their nationals in Baghdad after convicting them on smuggling charges. The King blasted the Iraqi regime for what many Jordanians considered an act of betrayal on Iraq's side of the special ties that bind both countries. Nothing could justify the brutal treatment of the four Jordanians. In an unprecedented move, Jordan expelled a number of Iraqi diplomats and recalled its ambassador in Baghdad for consultations.

Jordanians had every right to be dismayed. Until today Jordan is paying a heavy price for its popular support of Iraq during the Gulf War, when a US-led military alliance congregated in the Arabian desert to force Saddam's army out of Kuwait. Because of the Jordanian stand, which did not back Iraq's occupation of Kuwait but firmly objected to a military solution, Jordan felt the brunt of Arab and

international isolation and economic punishment.

The special relationship between the two countries did not begin during the Gulf War. It preceded it by almost a decade, when the first Gulf War erupted between Iraq and Iran. As a result of its alliance with Iraq, Jordan was generously rewarded by Baghdad. The Jordanian economy evolved in such a way that it became heavily dependent on Iraqi trade and it too paid the price when Iraq was bombed out of Kuwait in 1991 and locked up under strict UN sanctions.

nomically, many Jordanian businessmen continued to trade with Iraq, while high-powered Iraqi businessmen, like this week's victims, operated from Amman. And their only link to the outside world, throughout this period, Jordan remained completely dependent, as it was for many years, on cheap Iraqi oil supplies, which were given to Jordan to pay for Iraqi debts to the kingdom.

This very awkward, but still special relationship, somehow survived the tests of time and political changes in the region. And every time tension between the two

leaderships reached a high point, it somehow left the economic and popular relationships unscathed.

But this week, bloody murders in luxurious Amman villas notwithstanding, new signs of strain at the political level have emerged. In an unexpected move, the Iraqi president ordered the release of over 60 Jordanian detainees and convicts from Iraqi prisons after meeting with President of the Engineers Association Laith Shbiel, a key opposition figure in Jordanian politics. An Iraqi presidential statement said the release "comes in honor of the Jordanian people who have put their moral weight behind the patriotic person of Shbiel." Again Jordanians looked for symbolism in the latest Iraqi initiative. The Jordanian government cautiously welcomed the release of its nationals, but criticized the fact that it was not informed of it through proper diplomatic channels.

It is difficult to predict future developments in the special relationship between the two countries. At the popular level, Jordanians still sympathize with the plight of the Iraqi people and there are still those who support the Iraqi leadership, perceived as the last bastion against the sinister American imperialist and Israeli Zionist alliance. At the political level, the King remains critical of the Iraqi regime, its blunders and crimes against the people of Iraq, but has watered down earlier calls for a direct change of the political leadership in that country. And while the Iraqi opposition exists nominally on Jordanian soil, it has not been allowed to work actively against the Iraqi regime.

All in all, and while the real motives and the identity of the killers behind this week's gruesome mass murder remain a mystery, Jordanians are becoming wary about the prospects of their country becoming an arena for Iraqi feuding and liquidations. If anything, the events of the last few months have shown how liable Jordan can be as a result of its special connection to Iraq. The special relationship is again having its toll on Jordan. ■



Saddam: A costly relationship

The political relationship between the two countries began to suffer when Jordan joined the Madrid peace process and slowly began rebuilding its ties with the United States and the Gulf countries. The turn-around reached its apex when Jordan gave sanctuary to President Saddam's two sons-in-law and their wives. The ill-fated political refugees paid the ultimate price when they were lured back to Iraq few months later. During that period Jordan also allowed some anti-Saddam elements to operate freely in Jordan, along with hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who crossed the common border in search of a new life away from their besieged country.

But in spite of the obvious cooling off in relations on the political front, the popular mood in Jordan remained strongly in favor of Iraq, as that country continued to suffer under the sanctions regime. Eco-

Torture in Israel continues... legally sanctioned

TORTURE AGAINST Palestinians along with all kinds of illegally outlawed tactics continue throughout the occupied territories and in Israeli prisons.

Gross forms of collective punishment, deportations, home demolitions, blockades, and "legalized" land seizures—all outlawed by longstanding international conventions—have been a constant feature of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians for decades and in many ways have been increased since the current "peace process" began after the Gulf War of 1991.

Just traveling between Palestinian towns and villages, or attempting to go from Bethlehem or Ramallah to Jerusalem (normally a 10 minute trip), is now a major problem for the great majority of Palestinians who are denied permission to do so by the Israeli occupation army. Of course torture and other forms of severe repression are practiced by the Arab regimes throughout the region against their own people—Israel is hardly alone.

Indeed, one of the main reasons neither the Arafat regime nor the neighboring Arab States condemn Israeli torture is that they are practicing worse forms of it themselves. But Israel is alone in giving its colonial and often-times racist policies the semblance of legality and the sanction of law. In this the closest analogy is the White South Africa with its Apartheid laws and racist "homeland" policies. Even the Israeli Chief Justice, Aharon Barak, recently voted in favor of a preliminary injunction to halt Israeli

torture of Palestinians. He was overruled in Israel's Supreme Court by a vote of 5 to 4.

The following information comes from The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment (LAW), a non-governmental organization in Jerusalem dedicated to preserving human rights through legal advocacy.

On 11 Sunday December in an exceptional nine judge panel hearing, the Israeli High Court again postponed coming to a decision barring the use of torture in Israeli prisons, after hearing a case last Wednesday submitted by the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI).

The Court heard the cases of Fuad Awad Qur'an, held

incommunicado since 10 December 1997, and of Abd al Rahman Ismail Ghanimat, held and interrogated since 13 November 1997.

Lawyers for PCATI stated that hooding, handcuffing in painful positions on a very small slanted stool, sleep deprivation and constant blaring music for prolonged periods sometimes up to five days constituted torture, forbidden by international law, and are methods used to extract confessions.

In December, the Israeli intelligence services admitted to routinely using these methods during interrogation, but said that these methods are used for administrative purposes.

Hooding and blaring music, for example, prevents detainees from speaking to

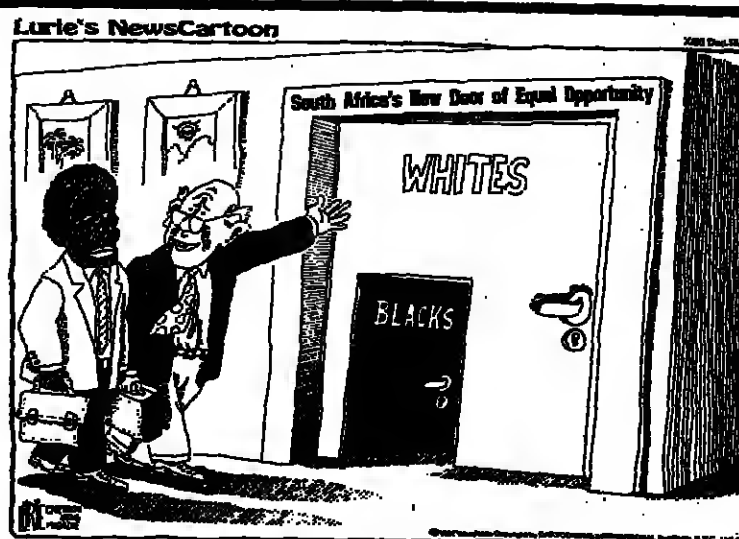
each other.

It should be noted here that the Israeli intelligence has stated that neither Ghanimat nor Qur'an are considered so-called "ticking bombs."

In its decision the nine-judge panel, in a 5-4 vote, refused to give a temporary injunction against the use of torture during the ongoing interrogation of Ghanimat and Qur'an, and decided to join two other outstanding cases on torture (including head shaking, which last resulted in the death of a Palestinian detainee in 1995) and to rule later on its general use.

Chief Justice Barak voted in the dissent to issue the temporary injunction against the use of torture. ■

MER



"Now, finally, we can go through the same door!"
(From: President Nelson Mandela heard out at South Africa's whites, saying that they expect continued economic advantages, and define "racialized reconstruction" as a guarantee that their privileged economic positions remain untouched.)

Middle East Beat

by Khairi Janbek

The state V. Rafah

TURKEY'S EXPERIENCE with radical politics is certainly an old one. The 1970s era was dominated by right-wing, and left wing clashes which had their roots in the 1960s youth movement. Just as the cultural shock troops of the '60s generation transformed themselves into the later terrorists, Turkey had its share of this socio-political phenomenon.

General Evren's September 1981 military takeover came to end this state of political uncertainty. The emergent Turkish democracy afterwards, came face to face with a new phenomenon, that grew stronger in the post-modernist world, and the end of the age of bipolarity. It also politicized Islamic movements.

One cannot judge Turkey's Rafah Party in terms of radicalization or moderation, the only criterion that can be used under the circumstances is the judgement of the Turkish Constitutional Court which has disbanded Rafah, and prohibited its leader Mr Erbakan from pursuing his career in politics for the next five years.

This shows that the secular version of Kemalism in Turkey is an ideology that will be defended against all forces, just as was the case in the 1970s, but this time with constitutional methods. The unsealing of the Turkish state and its official secularist Kemalism, with all other political manifestations, has very deep historical roots, especially in the case of Islamic political organizations. The identification of institutionalized Islam with the laicist regime, and the ambivalent role played by Muslim clerics during what is termed as the Turkish War of Independence with the drive of the late Mustafa Kemal to modernize the ethos of the new Turkish republic, had already set the tone for the current political relationship, between secularist Turkey, and political Islamisation.

Undoubtedly, this is a totally Turkish affair, but it proves at the same time, that Turkey is an integral part of our region, as well as the larger Islamic nation. Otherwise, neither the Arab nor the Islamic worlds would have been interested in these recent developments, regardless of the forces that view Turkey with exclusion. It is important to remind ourselves of the importance of Turkey in regional and Islamic dimensions, but it is also important to remind her of its sense of belonging.

One does not wish to over-dwell on the question of the State Vs. Rafah, but rather on the more dangerous currents, the ruptures that are likely to emerge due to the recent talk in Turkey about three important issues related to what may be considered as renovation in Islam, and what others may consider as deviation from it. The issues are the language of the call to prayers and its change into Turkish, the fight of women to conduct the call for prayers, and finally the right of women to participate in funeral prayers.

Obviously, there is nothing that should detract from the equality of the sexes in this matter or in any other, but such seemingly straightforward matters may have important ramifications in the whole Islamic world. Therefore, important issues that are related to a world movement, may best be followed with more prudence than actually being done. The debate in Turkey over these three issues, should perhaps, involve many other concerned parties, mainly non-Arab speaking Muslims whom incidentally, constitute the majority in Islam, including the Turks. Research or (ijtihad) is not limited to any one particular nation, in as much as Islam is not exclusively an Arab religion, nor its message limited to any particular race.

It is very important, that issues related to Islam and its tradition be openly discussed on a worldly level, rather than from the specifics of national peculiarities. ■

سازمان اطلاعات

Business scene

■ The council of the Securities Committee of the AFM has lately approved the listing of the shares of the Export and Finance Bank in the after meeting all listing conditions according to article 8. Also, the Council has approved the orders of Vegetable Oils Factories Co., and the National Insurance Co., to register their shares to raise their capitals through either private subscription or capitalization of optional reserve. The increase of the Vegetable Oils Factories' capital will be 3,056 million shares (private subscription) while for the National Insurance Co., the rise will be through 750,000 shares (capitalization of optional reserve).

■ The South Filters Manufacturing Co., has signed a joint contract with the Korean based Green Filter to import equipment and supplies to the former's factory. The agreement which also stipulates to provide technical and training aid, is worth \$1,570,143. The Green Filters contributes by 10 percent to the capital of the South Filters Manufacturing. The project will operate at an annual productive capacity of 3 million filters. Overall investment costs of the project are estimated at JD 2,254,000. The South Filters Manufacturing Company was established in 1997 at a capital of JD 2 million.

■ Despite the fact that the Central Bank of Jordan sees it as "normal," the hot checks phenomena continues to be on the increase. Till last November, the value of bounced cheques reached JD 389 million, out of a total of JD 978 million cheques being exchanged. This is according to statistics released by the Central Bank of Jordan on cheques issued by clearance centers in Amman, Irbid, Zerga and Aqaba. During last November only, the value of returned cheques was about JD 38.7 million, including JD 22.4 million rejected because of insufficient coverage of the balance while JD 16.3 million bounced for other reasons.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 21 January

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US \$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFr	0.4801	0.4825
FFr	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Jordan's Duty Free Shops, a novel idea designed to keep customers rolling

By Marwan Asmar
Star Staff Writer

IN TODAY'S fast moving, and competitive world of business, the name of the game is about establishing a wide customer base, making sure that consumers keep coming back time after time. This is not only done through slick advertising but by adopting ideas and beliefs to create a stable business environment where commercial activity continues to grow.

It is with this in mind that a local company hit upon the idea of making the most of Jordan's busy tourist trade. The Jordanian Duty Free Shops Co. Ltd is a new venture that today is seeking to be a part of the new business culture.

Established last year at a capital of JD 5 million, the JDF is a new concept in duty free shopping in Jordan. Its duty free shops are strategically located at major crossing points in the north and south of the country.

With a dynamic director at the helm who spends his time out of the office travelling to JDF centers at crossing points in Wadi Araba, the Jordan Valley Crossing Point and the King Hussein Bridge, the concept of duty free shopping is really taking a new dynamic turn.

JDF Director Mr. Haidam Al Majali says the aim is to "provide top quality

service to passengers and visitors crossing the Jordanian borders through our exquisite selection of products at affordable prices."

And affordability is the catchphrase. Both tourists and diplomats can frequent these shops and buy whatever they desire. On display is a rich selection of duty free items from top international brand names. Omega, Raymond Weil and Swatch watches to name but few, are only matched with high electronic gadgetry. Again the selection is so wide ranging from cassette recorders, video cameras, radio sets to hair dryers, meat mincers, coffee grinders, calculators and compact discs.

But there is certainly plenty more. There is for instance, a multitude of leatherwear, from suitcases right down to ladies handbags and men's wallets. The variety is endless. There are even cigarette lighters and sunglasses for the initiated.

And wait for it, JDF officials say there is virtually something for everyone. Tourists and diplomats can enjoy the luxury of one-stop shopping in one of the company's centers. Estee Lauder, Nina Ricci, Roan and Lancombe cosmetics stand next to the different perfumes that are in stock.

In Amman, tourists and diplomats don't need to look very far. At the JDF's newest shop at the City Terminus

in the capital's 7th Circle, there is also top quality brand watches, costume jewelry, toys, handicrafts and souvenirs.

All these goods are besides the traditional favorites such as chocolates, cigarettes and spirits. Again all these are displayed lavishly. In the confectionery section for instance, there are such famous names as Nestle, Golden Toms Gulian, etc. The same goes for cigarettes such as Philip Morris, Brown and Williams, R. J. Reynolds and Rothmans. As for spirits there are also the famous brands.

JDF is a successful joint venture between the public and private sector. The aim of these shops are to generate hard currency for the national economy says Mr. Majali. Although, they are still being opened, the response rate has been very positive.

At competitive prices coupled with both the provision of quality and variety products, people from neighboring countries have been flocking over the borders. The JDF center at the Jordan Valley's crossing point (formerly Sheikh Al Hussein Bridge) is today just one of the showcases of the JDF Shops Co. Ltd. Over the Christmas period last December, Israeli Arabs came in droves over the bridge to buy their goods from the center.

Today, they continue to comeback, saying they are looking for value for



Al Majali

money and variety, something which they are finding in the duty free center.

Similarly, the company's new center is at the King Hussein Bridge has just opened last week. Also the Wadi Araba JDF shop will open in the middle of February. The same goes for the JDF shop at Jaber border (Syrian border) which will open in the middle of February.

Today the Company is actively contemplating of opening up another duty free shop on Jordan's border with Iraq. The Al Karamah Duty Free Shop is due to open in the first of March. What is special at this shop is that it will have a pharmacy with a full time chemist.

Judging from the regional response rate, the Jordanian duty free idea is quickly becoming a very important part of the economy. Both tourists and diplomats are seeing the novelty of one-stop shopping at favorable prices. For diplomats, there is also a 12.5 percent discount on cigarettes and spirits and 5 percent slash on all the other products. For the comfort of diplomats, the JDF company is planning to open a "mini-market" on Jabal Amman's 4th Circle at the end of March.

The shops around the country are always plentiful. One official said that goods can be ordered and received within a matter of days, so there is always a steady supply of goods.

Jordan's duty free concept has been well studied. The number of locations that are being set up is carefully based on the tourists arrivals and departures at the Kingdom's crossing points. ■



JDF at the Jordan Valley crossing point

Record share rise for AFM in 1997

THE MARKET value of share prices at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) recorded a rise of 11.6 percent last year to reach JD 3.8 billion.

In a press conference Dr. Michel Marto, chairperson of the Securities Committee, said that such rise has resulted from the increase in the value of shares and the hike in the bulk of subscribed shares to hit 1.1 billion shares in 1997 against 9.7 million in 1996.

Compared with the shares market value in 1990, the figure rocketed by 198 percent. This sharp rise is associated with another leap in the volume of subscribed stocks by about 190 percent.

However, Dr. Marto added that the market value to the book value has declined in 1997 by 0.3 points.

As for trading at the primary market, including bonds and stocks Dr. Marto said that they generated a growth of 62 percent to reach JD 335.2 million in 1997 compared with JD 206.7 million in 1996.

Referring to the bonds market, Dr. Marto elaborated that the value of traded bonds on the AFM in 1997 dropped by 60.9 percent compared with the



Marto speaking during a press conference

previous year, to reach JD 2 million only.

The bonds market in Jordan is still in its early stages and thus intensive efforts are required to develop such vital tools and diversify the sources of finance needed for investment enterprises. ■

Germany cracks down on tax cheats

By William Drozdzak

BERLIN—State informants have an odious pedigree in Germany. The Nazi dictatorship and East Germany's communist rulers sustained their power through a network of domestic spies who were encouraged to rat on colleagues, neighbors and even spouses deemed to be "enemies of the state."

The prosperous democracy that has flourished for nearly 50 years as the Federal Republic of Germany has scorned such methods and prided itself on protecting innocent people from vengeful accusers. But with the government losing as much as \$100 billion a year through tax evasion, German authorities are saying drastic measures that carry some sinister overtones from the past may be necessary.

Finance ministers from Germany's 16 states will meet next week to consider plans to offer cash rewards to informants who squeal on suspected tax evaders.

The proposal has unleashed protests from critics who say that such payoffs would resurrect a "denunciation culture" of sowing suspicions in a society that inflicted so much tragedy in modern German history.

Civil libertarians warn that angry employees, jilted lovers and abandoned wives would produce an avalanche of accusations that would overwhelm investigators and erode trust in relationships.

"We must not create a snooper state which reminds us of the unspeakable practices of the Nazis and Communists," said Karl-Heinz Doeke, president of the Federation of German Taxpayers.

"The smartest thing this government could do is to bury this idea as soon as possible."

With national elections scheduled this September, politicians are reluctant to endorse any tax-collection initiatives that smack of the totalitarian past.

But with the state facing a slide in revenues when it is desperate to trim budget deficits to qualify for a single European currency, members of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's center-right government say they have no choice but to wage an all-out war against tax evasion.

With top income tax rates now at 53 percent, wealthy Germans

are moving their money out of the country at a record pace, finance officials said.

Many are known to favor setting up shell companies in the Netherlands or parking cash in Swiss banks.

Several highly publicized cases have drawn attention to the problem. The father of tennis star Steffi Graf was imprisoned last year after being convicted of dodging several million dollars in taxes on his daughter's earnings.

Four top executives of Dresdner Bank, the country's second biggest, were forced to resign recently after acknowledging that they illicitly sheltered money in foreign accounts.

The notion of paying informants to snare tax dodgers arose last month when a French citizen offered information on 270 bank accounts held by Germans in Luxembourg to tax investigators in the German state of Saarland.

The informant said that in return for a cash payment of \$270,000, he could produce documents proving the accounts contained up to \$100 million in illegal German holdings.

After consultations with state authorities, German finance officials concluded that of-

fering cash rewards was a legitimate way to gain information in tax investigations. But to avoid a flood of false accusations that could overwhelm authorities, the federal government established guidelines saying payments should be made only "in cases of exceptional criminal energy with serious prejudice to the state." It also ruled that no bounty should be paid when evidence was acquired illegally.

Under Germany's federal system of government, the states are in charge of tax investigations and would be given the autonomy to decide whether and how much to pay to their various informants. But already, officials in several states are expressing reluctance about heading down a dubious road that was followed in the past by totalitarian German regimes.

"The law-based state simply should not get involved in carrying out the dirty work of criminals," said Erwin Huber, Bavaria's finance minister. "The ends do not always justify the means." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

MARKET WATCH

17-20 January

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arab Investment: 5.88 Mineral Hunt: 4.93 Industry Development Bank: 2.94 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Azeer Investment: 5.13 Al Razy Industry: 2.94 United Land Transport: 1.78 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arab Electrical Industry: 4.44 Middle East Complex: 3.23 Jordan French Insurance: 2.94 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jordan Trade Center: 4.44 National Industry: 4.44 Bank of Jordan: 4.03
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Fur Printing: 5.26 Al-Azeer Industry: 5.48 National Industry: 4.17 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Fur Printing: 5.56 Al-Azeer Industry: 5.11 Arab Industry: 5.06 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rafid Plastic: 4.96 Arab Investment: 5.77 Arab Chemical Industry: 4.96 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al Azeer Food Industry: 13.89 JMCO: 6.25 Rural: 5.17
General Price Pointers: 166,440	166,890	165,840	165,490
Trade Volume: 497,520	447,460	720,530	1,259,514
Stock Volume: 454,237	391,875	561,066	1,422,402
Highest Traded Stocks: 91,353	122,305	147,742	527,444
Development Bank	Arab Bank	Arab-Pharm.	Middle East Complex

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

Business Chronicle

Tax evasion costs government millions of dinars

THE NUMBER of reported tax evasion cases is said to cost the state coffers many losses. About 75 percent of people avoid disclosing their fiscal statements while only 25 percent submit such reports and abide to the instructions of the Income Tax Dept., (ITD). Such gravely affects the department's annual revenues. Latest statistics released by the ITD and officials in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) show that 70 percent of those who pay their taxes are large companies whereas the percentage falls to as low as 30 percent for individuals. Accordingly, the size of income tax revenues dropped from JD 156 million in 1995 to JD 153 million last year. However as mentioned in this year's budget, the size of income tax revenues is estimated at about JD 191,300,000.

Due to the increase in the number of income tax evasion cases, the department has concluded an agreement with the UNDP to carry out a four-year joint program to develop the department's services and improve the existing technical and computerized methods. The program which started in 1996, costs about JD 3.5 million includes a comprehensive and periodic review of strategic schemes adopted by the ITD. So far, the first stages of the program have been finalized at a cost of about \$730,000. The UNDP financed \$216,000 and the government paid \$514,000.

The reason behind the evasion phenomenon is to do with lack of awareness among the public and because of loopholes in the regulations says UNDP Resident Representative in Amman Mr. Jorgen Lissner. This makes it easy to evade paying the income tax.

However Mr. Lissner adds that such an issue is not only in Jordan but it exists in many countries over the world. So we'd better give the problem its real size and be rational.

Speaking about regulations and measures being followed in Jordan in collecting income taxes, Mr. Lissner says that the ITD and its staff are qualified and efficient but the problem lies in the computer systems that are very old and need modernization.

Some Jordanians do not submit their tax statements on schedule while the number of tax collectors in the department is not enough. So it is hard to chase evaders and force them to pay their due income taxes especially of workers in the private sector because it is difficult to quantify their incomes. But if a severe punishment for those people is introduced in accordance with legislations, then tax evasions could stop. Before that however, a comprehensive awareness campaign should be adopted to boost individual's commitment to pay the tax and submit the income statement to the ITD in time.

The joint project being sponsored by the ITD and the UNDP, aims at inducing people to pay their income taxes and not to increase the rate of taxes.

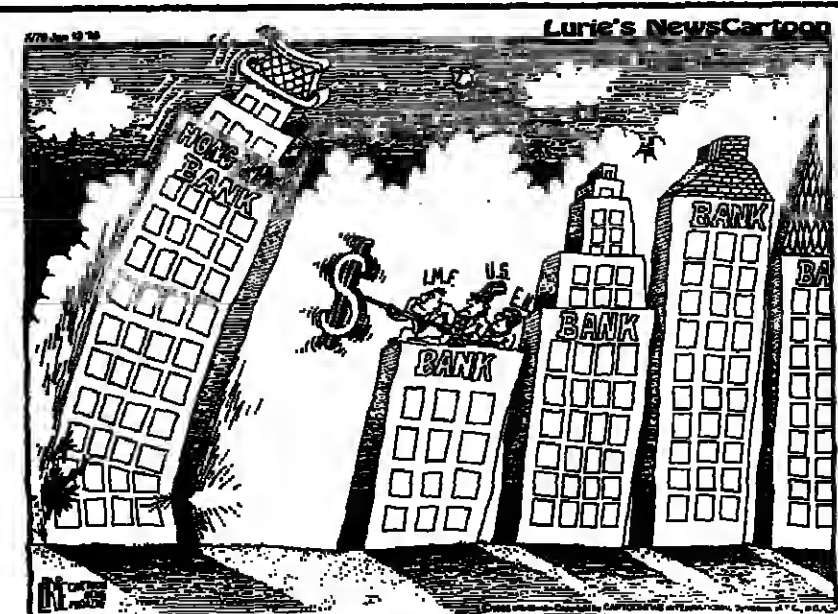
The Income Tax Department, as Mr. Lissner suggests, could double its revenues this year to about JD 200 million if it follows a strategic plan, doubles its staff and modernizes its computer systems. ■

The Star

Jordan's published, accurate and reliable daily

Online

http://www.arabia.com/star



Confronting the Dumbo Effect

(Lurie's cartoon: In Hong Kong, the largest investment bank in Asia outside of Japan, PricewaterhouseCoopers Holdings, was forced to shut down. It's the first major casualty of the economic crisis that has plagued Asia lately. Economists wonder how this will affect international banking.)

Turkish Islamists vow to establish new party despite Rafah ban

By Kelly Cauturier

ANKARA—Turkey's Constitutional Court last Friday banned the country's largest political movement, the Islamic-based Welfare Party, saying it had threatened the nation's secular system of government.

"It's unthinkable to have a democracy without political parties, but it doesn't mean no limits should be put on them," Chief Justice Ahmet Necdet Sezer said in announcing the court's ruling, which outlawed the party "for its activities against the secular regime."

As part of the court decision, former prime minister Necmettin Erbakan, the Welfare Party's chairman, and a handful of other party members were removed from parliament and banned from participating in party politics for five years.

The ruling capped a nearly year-long battle against the party by Turkey's fiercely secularist armed forces and the military-supported government.

Erbakan, 71, appealed to his supporters to remain calm and resist provocations in the wake of the ruling, which he termed a "grave judicial mistake." He said he would appeal the decision to the European Court of Human Rights.

Erbakan predicted the grassroots, conservative Islamic movement that forms most of Welfare's constituency will be strengthened by the court's action.

"This decision is a mere moment in history," he said, adding the ruling "can have

only one result"—to bring the Welfare movement to power on its own.

"We will continue our mission under a new name and a new leader," said Lutfu Esengun, a close aide to Welfare chairman and former prime minister Necmettin Erbakan.

Erbakan, who has led three pro-Islamic parties over a 30-year political career, was barred from participating in party politics and lost his seat in parliament as part of the court's decision.

Police tightened security on the streets of Ankara in case of protests against the verdict, the Anatolian news agency said.

"Security measures have been taken near Welfare headquarters, parliament and mosques," it said.

The mood at Friday prayers in central Istanbul was calm, the Reuters news agency reported.

The Welfare Party, whose short-lived government coalition was brought down by military pressure last summer, has never resorted to violence in its challenge of the secular state ideology that has governed Turkey for 74 years.

But its campaign for moderate Islamic-oriented reforms and overtures to Iran and Libya—as well as the fiery provocative speeches of some party officials—outraged the country's Western-leaning mili-



tary and civilian establishment, who became convinced the party was intent on creating an Islamic state.

Since Welfare's fall from power, government authorities have cracked down on the Islamic movement. They have phased out religious middle schools and imposed stricter enforcement of dress codes outlawing religious apparel, such as women's head scarves, in public buildings. Two Welfare Party mayors have been convicted and sentenced to prison for speeches they made or organized.

Many analysts share the opinion of Welfare leaders that the ban on the party will do little to quash the country's pow-

erful pro-Islamic movement, especially if the current fragile governing coalition led by Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz proves unable to address the nation's pressing problems, including a 100 percent inflation rate.

Yilmaz said of the ruling: "We are sorry to see that Welfare has been dissolved for acting against the constitution. But before reaching this state, I had advised Erbakan to do some self-criticism."

Despite the ban, 147 Welfare Party members will remain in parliament as independents.

Meanwhile several of Erbakan's aides already have formed a new party, the Virtue Party, but it was unclear whether that, or another party, would be chosen as Welfare's successor.

"It could be that (Virtue) party, or another party, but there will definitely be a new organization," Esengun told reporters. He declined to mention names of possible successors to Erbakan.

In response to Esengun's announcement, Turkey's chief prosecutor, who brought to the high court the case to ban Welfare, said he would not tolerate any attempt to continue the pro-Islamic movement under a new party.

The prosecutor, Vural Savas, welcomed the ban. "I did the

greatest (public) service. Those who use religion for political propaganda cause the greatest harm to religion," Savas was quoted as saying in a television interview.

Many Turks still support the country's secular principles, and share the establishment's view that the Welfare Party's true aim is to use democracy to come to power and then establish an Islamic-based state.

The court's decision in ban the party, which will take effect when the ruling is published in the Official Gazette, probably next week, continued to be criticized at home and abroad.

Erbakan, who has vowed to

bring the case to the European Court of Human Rights, confidently said at a party meeting that the European court "will rule that Welfare's dissolution is against contemporary justice criteria for scores of reasons."

"Europe will then explode in the face of this great injustice," said the former prime minister, who stepped down last June when his governing coalition collapsed under heavy military pressure.

Last Friday's decision to dissolve the party was the culmination of a year-long campaign by the military-backed secular establishment, which accused Welfare of becoming a haven

for radical religious activity that threatened modern Turkey's secular foundations.

"This is a decision that costs Turkey its democratic credentials and will not achieve what it sets out to achieve, which is the elimination of political Islam here," said one European diplomat based in Ankara.

"You can ban a party, but you cannot ban 6 million voters," the diplomat said, referring to the Welfare Party's estimated ballot-box strength. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Syrians hold US responsible for peace process

By John Lancaster

DAMASCUS—Syrian Foreign Minister Faruk Sharaa said this week that the Clinton administration has become "ineffective" as an arbiter of Middle East peace and warned of dire consequences for American interests in the region if relations between Israel and the Arabs continue to fray.

Recalling the pivotal American role in initiating peace negotiations among Israel and its Arab neighbors, Sharaa said that only Washington has the political and moral clout to persuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to soften his hard line on negotiations with the Palestinians and Syria.

"That's why we feel it is wrong when the American top officials say, 'Well, of course, we cannot impose peace. It is up to the parties to decide,'" Sharaa said in a rare interview with two American newspapers, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*.

"The US as a major co-sponsor should pinpoint the party that is violating the basis of the peace," he added. "They cannot say, 'We are neutral in this,' because otherwise what's the role of the mediator, what's the role of the initiator?"

Sharaa spoke just days before President Clinton is due to host Netanyahu in Washington to try to break the impasse between Israel and the Palestinians over land transfers and security issues. His comments served as a reminder that Israel—and by extension the United States—also has important unfinished business with the Syrians, who are seeking the return of the Golan Heights, a high plateau captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East War.

Syrian-Israeli peace talks broke off in March 1996 after Israel suspended its participation following a series of bus bombings. In the absence of a peace settlement, Syria has continued to support Lebanese Shiite Muslim guerrillas fight-



Sharaa

ing to eject Israeli troops from the strip of land they occupy in south Lebanon as a buffer against attacks on northern Israel.

In several conversations here this week, Syrian officials reiterated that Syrian participation is essential to a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement and expressed frustration at what they regard as Washington's neglect of the so-called Syrian track.

"The collapse of the peace process... would be the responsibility of the United States, no doubt about this," Sharaa said Saturday night. "All people would put the blame on the United States."

Syria's growing sense of isolation is evident in its foreign policy. In a move interpreted by foreign diplomats as a signal to Washington that Damascus has other cards to play, Syria last summer opened its border with Iraq to limited commercial traffic after 17 years of unbridled hostility. And Syria has condemned a new military alliance between Israel and Turkey—which earlier this month rehearsed joint search-and-rescue operations off Israel's Mediterranean coast—as a threat to Arab security.

Among other things, Syria fears that Israeli aircraft could strike Syrian targets from Turkish airspace if war were to erupt between the two countries, according to foreign diplomats here. The United States has supported the alliance and participated in the recent exercises.

Notwithstanding the depth of Syrian frustration, over the stalled peace process, and the widespread belief here that US foreign policy is dictated largely by Israel, criticism of the Clinton administration in government-controlled media and other public forums is relatively mild.

Sharaa, in fact, went out of his way to praise the American role in sponsoring the 1991 Madrid conference, which established the principle of exchanging land for peace, and kicked off what is now known as the peace process. "President Clinton was effective during the first term," Sharaa said. "He was directly involved and gave it a priority in foreign affairs."

With American help, Syria and Israel made progress toward a settlement during talks held in Maryland in late 1995 and early 1996. Just how much progress is unclear. According to Syrian accounts, Israeli negotiators acting on authority of Israel's then-prime minister, Shimon Peres, committed to full withdrawal from the Golan. Israel, however, has denied the existence of any formal commitment.

After Netanyahu defeated Peres in May 1996, Syrian President Hafez Assad called on Israel to resume negotiations on the Golan at the point where they had broken off the previous March. Netanyahu, however, has called for negotiations "without preconditions," language that the Syrians have interpreted as a rejection of the understandings they say were reached in Maryland. American mediators have thus far failed to persuade either side to budge. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

To kill
or not
to kill

By Carrie Nelle Moye

I BELIEVE in the death penalty. Most colleagues and friends who share my other political views and life philosophies are aghast at this. And perhaps the thousands of tests conducted indicate that the death penalty does not deter capital crime. But I do know this: if one of my children—or anyone whom I loved—was murdered, I would be hell-bent to see the life of the criminal snuffed out. And in the case of one of my progeny, I would be hard pressed not to take the action myself.

I am well aware of "the other side." There is an argument for claiming that a society that metes out executions loses much that has designated it a "society." I do not feel the criminality insane should be executed. Is Unsubomber Ted Kaczynski insane? How can he not be? Even if he were the most clever individual in the world and presently is concocting the best criminally insane defense possible, his past life style and writings over the last 15-20 years clearly indicate he is a man quite mentally deranged.

Should he be put in death? Hardly. The insane are just that: insane. And as a society cannot eradicate our mentally disordered citizens.

Then there is the other extreme. Who can argue with our lenient Richard Speck continue to live since 1966 at an extreme expense to, and even mockery for, our government and therefore to each of us? He murdered eight student nurses in Chicago, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Perhaps to most—at least to me—life imprisonment would be a fate far worse than death. Be that as it may, we now know that Speck lived a life in prison in which he gloried. He had a male lover and had access to plenty of drugs. All at our expense. He was pictured on television laughing at the system, at the government, at us.

Charles Manson? Should have been executed.

Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Is quoted in *Newsweek* as saying, "Yes, I am a terrorist and I am proud of it." Should be executed but instead has a prison sentence of 240 years.

Does prison rehabilitate? In the best of all situations, yes. But if the convicted killer was sane at the time of the act, he should pay the price.

Execution does not deter? I wonder. A Syrian diplomat told me of being taken to the main square in Damascus on a school field trip when he was in the second grade. The entire school population witnessed the execution of prisoners convicted of murder. I in no way condone the wisdom of this. But I know one thing: my friend noted that one-on-one killing (let us forget the political intrigues) in Syria, Lebanon and neighboring countries is rare. Justice is swift and final. (This includes justice for rape also: In the midst of civil fighting in Beirut, I, as a woman alone, could walk the streets at night and feel perfectly safe except for the chance of being caught in crossfire between various fighting factions, being by a car when a pre-emptive bomb exploded, or being hit by stray fire from Israeli gunboats firing in the direction of Palestinian camps. But not once was I afraid when I met a man coming toward me on a street.)

My diplomat friend said most definitely one-on-one murder or rape simply were not to be considered by his citizenry and culture.

(As a little girl, my daddy took me into the end-of-the-road prison in Georgia, Reidsville. I was shown the electric chair—a straight-backed wooden chair painted in stark white. I have never known why Daddy did this; he was a government official, we were there on official business, and I guess this was his way of show-and-tell. I was awed, not scared. And it would take a psychoanalyst to know if this experience had any bearing on my mixed feelings about executions. Daddy was an absolute believer in them, of course.)

So what do we do with Theodore Kaczynski, assuming he is guilty? "An eye for an eye" or "There shall not kill?" To me the answer is simple: be incarcerated in an institution for the criminally insane. But if one of the victims were my child?

Damn! Straddling that barbed wire fence is so uncomfortable. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

UN, Iraq at loggerheads despite negotiations

By Craig Turner

UNITED NATIONS—Talks in Baghdad aimed at breaking the deadlock over UN weapons inspections in Iraq began Monday with both sides mulling down long-standing—and mutually incompatible—bargaining positions.

Richard Butler, the Australian disarmament expert who heads the UN inspection program, rejected an ultimatum issued last Saturday by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein demanding a deadline for completing the inspection process.

Meanwhile, a crowd of demonstrators estimated at 1,500 to 5,000 protested outside UN offices in the Iraqi capital. The government-sanctioned protest demanded an end to economic sanctions against Iraq and featured demonstrators burning replicas of American flags and carrying coffins representing children whose deaths were blamed on the sanctions.

UN and American officials have termed the talks crucial in the latest confrontation between Iraq and the West, which has flared off and on since late October.

The weapons inspections, agreed to by Iraq after its defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, are intended to ensure that Hussein's government has given up its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and its long-range missiles.

Butler's team must certify that Iraq no longer has such weapons capacity

before the sanctions can be lifted by the UN Security Council. That assurance has not been forthcoming because the inspectors believe Iraq may still be secretly conducting illegal weapons research.

Iraq contends it has destroyed all its proscribed weapons and that the inspections are a cover for United States espionage.

Butler met for three hours last Monday night with Tariq Aziz, Iraq's deputy prime minister, according to officials here. Negotiations are scheduled to conclude Tuesday.

Before the meeting, Butler repeated that the inspectors must be permitted to visit and investigate any place in the country, including Hussein's palaces and other "presidential sites" placed off limits by the Iraqi government.

"There is a concealment program in this country," Butler told reporters. "We've got to get rid of those weapons. Then the whole situation is going to get a whole lot healthier. The last lap of this race maybe is the hardest. But we've got to run it, otherwise Lord knows what will happen."

Butler also repeated the UN willingness to put into effect a protocol for visiting sensitive sites that takes into consideration Iraqi concerns about its national sovereignty and security. Iraq has agreed to such protocols before but refused to stick to them, the UN says.

Butler also signaled that he may

change the composition of some inspection teams in response to Iraqi concerns that they include too many American and British experts; those two countries did much of the fighting against Iraq in the Gulf War and remain its most implacable foes on the Security Council.

Butler has said the inspectors are selected based on their expertise, their willingness to work under difficult conditions in Baghdad and their ability to speak English, the working language of the UN disarmament commission. He told reporters Monday he would be willing to take a "second look at their nationalities but only after looking at their qualifications."

He recently accepted three Chinese inspectors and has a list of 60 Russians offered by Moscow as candidates. The French also are recruiting prospects. China, Russia and France are three members of the Security Council considered most sympathetic to Iraq.

Besides refusing to admit inspectors to some sites suspected of harboring illegal weapons research, Iraq has complained that American inspectors are spies. Last week, Iraq blocked most inspections by a team led by Scott Ritter, a retired US Marine Corps captain accused by Iraq of being an American spy—a claim Ritter and the United Nations denied. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Israelis use Sabbath laws to make a quick buck

By Nicholas Goldberg

KIBBUTZ SHEFAYIM, Israel—On Shabbat—the day religious Jews traditionally refrain from driving, working, spending money or engaging in any commercial activity—the giant Ace Hardware outlet outside Tel Aviv does booming business.

Cars not only are massed in the parking lot and on the road that leads to it, but are hauled up onto the highway exit ramp. Entire families are disregarding the commandments big time, and money is changing hands feverishly.

"On Shabbat, we triple our daily business," said Omer Carmel, the company's CEO in Israel. "Jews are driving bumper to bumper, packing thousands of cars to come out here and shop on Saturdays. We want to make money, and they want to buy."

But although Ace Hardware may be a vivid testament to the secular soul of modern Israel, the store also has become a symbol of the ongoing conflicts here between the religious and the not-so-religious, both of whom are actively seeking to mold the Jewish state, 50 years after its birth, into the country they believe it should be.

Two weeks ago, a court here handed down the most severe penalty ever for violation of Israel's "Shabbat laws," charging Ace Hardware 120,000 shekels, or about \$37,500—in effect, for violating a commandment of God. The decision was based on a long-standing Israeli law that bars Jews—but not Christians or Muslims or anyone else—from working on Saturdays. Although it originally was passed in 1951 to protect workers from having to work seven-day weeks, the law is being used by Orthodox politicians to help enforce the Shabbat, backed by fines as high as \$2,500 for every Jew caught working. Ace Hardware was charged with employing dozens of Jewish employees on Shabbat, week after week after week.

"The fine imposed on Ace Hardware was unbelievable to me," said Zeev Segal, a professor of law and public policy at Tel Aviv University. "I've never seen the law enforced like that before."

But the judge's ruling did not come out of the blue. In recent months, the Israeli Ministry of Labor—controlled by the Orthodox religious party Shas for the first time in almost a decade—has been beefing up enforcement of Israel's Shabbat laws. As the months have passed, it has dispatched more and more inspectors—generally Druze Muslims or Bedouins—who are empowered to go into stores on Saturdays, check which employees are Jewish and to issue summonses and indictments against companies found to be employing Jews on Shabbat.

Previously, three or four cases a month were brought under the laws: that number climbed to 35 or 40 per month when Eli Yishai, a rabbi from Shas, was appointed Labor Minister after the election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996. The number of cases has settled down at about 25 or 30 per month.

"And why not?" asked Avner Shaki, an Orthodox member of Parliament from the National Religious Party, in an interview last week. "This is a Jewish country and its people are Jews by religion and the Torah says that Shabbat is a day of rest ordered by God. If you go out shopping that day and bring your car to buy and sell and smoke and ignore the command of God, it means you have forgot-

ten about Shabbat. If we don't enforce Shabbat here, what makes this a Jewish country?"

The battle over who may work and what businesses may operate on Saturdays is just one part of the ongoing war among Jews that has flared repeatedly. Its battle-ground in recent years has included whether the Orthodox rabbinate should retain sole control over marriages, burials and religious conversions, and the question of "who is a Jew."

Recently, the battle also has included the question of whether El Al, the Israeli national airline, should fly on Shabbat—It doesn't—and whether cars may drive on Shabbat through Bar-Ilan Street, the major thoroughfare in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of occupied Jerusalem—which they are still legally allowed to do. The question of whether the government may enforce compliance with Shabbat rules is one that dates to the earliest days of the state, and religious politicians often have tried to close businesses on Saturdays.

Many municipalities also have local laws barring shops from opening on Shabbat. What's more, if the government is unwilling to step in, the ultra-Orthodox community often does, sometimes by organizing a boycott on a store that opens Saturdays—as they threatened to do in the case of Ace Hardware—and sometimes by other means. In 1995, for instance, a restaurant in Jerusalem near an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood was fire-bombed apparently for opening on Saturday.

"These are issues of civil liberties and relig-

ious coercion," said Uri Regev, a Reform movement rabbi who has been working in favor of a more "pluralistic" approach to religion in the Jewish state. "The Shabbat laws are a microcosm of the whole battle between religion and state in Israel."

Repeated polls have shown that most Israelis are not interested in being restricted on the Sabbath. But the Shabbat laws have remained in place through the determined efforts of religious parties in Parliament, such as Shas and the National Religious Party.

Although they are small, these groups wield power disproportionate to their size because of their crucial political value to the people who run the country. Netanyahu and virtually all of his predecessors have found it necessary to include the religious parties in their government coalitions—and to grant them favors and legislation and funding—in order to maintain a parliamentary majority. What these parties want most is to turn Israel into a true Jewish state, and enforcing Shabbat laws—which they have done before when they have controlled the Labor Ministry—is one way to do that.

Of course, many countries have laws governing how many hours people may work, and many have "blue laws" barring stores from opening on certain days. But few dictate, as Israel does, that members of one religious group may not work one day, and others may. In the United States, such a law most likely would be found to violate the First Amendment of the Constitution, but Israel has no

constitution—thanks to 50 years of opposition from the religious parties.

"Who needs a constitution when we have the Torah?" asked one Knesset member from the National Religious Party several years ago.

Despite the efforts of the religious parties, Israel has changed over time. Where once there were only two restaurants open in West Jerusalem on Shabbat—and people had to buy tickets way in advance to get a table at them—now there are dozens. Now restaurants can stay open legally in most cities on Shabbat. Exemptions from the Shabbat laws also are granted to those "essential" institutions—such as hospitals, the police and army, electrical plants—which cannot close. And in many cases, stores that want to stay open may hire non-Jews to work on Shabbat—as Ace Hardware has begun doing.

There are other ways around the laws as well. Amos Meroz, a gallery owner in Zichron Yacov, tried to avoid a municipal law barring Jewish-owned stores from opening on Shabbat by selling his shop on paper to a Muslim every Friday and then buying it back on Sunday—much the same way religious Jews sell their leavened bread to non-Jews before Passover and then buy it back after the holiday. When that stopped working, Meroz said he would convert to Christianity or Islam in order to be allowed to stay open on Shabbat.

Some 800 stores are open on Shabbat in Israel, according to Efraim Cahalon, the Labor Ministry's Chief of Enforcement, not counting gasoline stations. A report in the newspaper *Yediot Aharanot* said that business transacted on Saturdays just on Israel's kibbutzim is estimated at 190 million shekels—or just under \$60 million per year.

"Seventy percent of our income comes on Shabbat," Meroz said. "Without Shabbat, we cannot exist." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Vanished civilization inspires intellectual, cultural outpouring

By John Lancaster

ASWAN, Egypt—Inch by inch, the waters crept higher, inundating the spacious mud-brick homes with their distinctive domed roofs, flooding the carefully tended citrus groves and eventually rising to the point where villagers used boats to harvest dates from the tallest palms. Then even the tree-tops disappeared. Nubia was no more.

In the space of a few years, a 6,000-year-old civilization had disappeared beneath Lake Nasser, created in the 1960s by the building of the Aswan High Dam on the Nile River. Thanks to a massive international effort, many of ancient Nubia's most impressive archaeological monuments, such as the Great Temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel, were moved to higher ground.

But for the Nubian people, and the culture they represent, the last 30 years have been a time of sadness and loss.

Resettled in dreary, government-built towns on both sides of the Egyptian-Sudanese border, they have fought an uphill battle to preserve the language and folklore of an ancient civilization that is part Arab, part African and wholly unique.

"How can you reclaim something that is now under 100 meters of water?" asked Abdel Meguid Ali Hassan, a former Sudanese diplomat and founder of the Nubian Studies and Documentation Centre in Cairo.



Fawziyah Dahab laments her vanished Nubian homeland, and the weakening of Nubian culture: "Our children are all speaking Arabic now," she says. "They understand Nubian, but they don't speak it."

"You're talking about the lost city of Atlantis," said Hassan, who grew up in the Nile Valley town of Wadi Halfa, Sudan. "Believe me, this is the kind of agony that has prompted the emergence of this new Nubian awareness."

But now their efforts are starting to bear fruit. After a decade of delays and contract

disputes, the Egyptian government opened a sparkling new museum here in November that is dedicated to preserving not just the artifacts of Nubian life but also its songs, poetry and the memories of those who lived in Egypt's 46 Nubian villages before they vanished beneath the lake.

Besides the Nubia Museum, the last several years have witnessed a flourishing of Nubian intellectual life, both in Egypt and abroad, including the founding of several Nubian cultural organizations.

Even the most dedicated of Nubian traditionalists agree that such efforts can only go so far in a country where Nubian children are schooled in Arabic and government-issue textbooks make scant mention of Nubia's many contributions to Egyptian history.

Nevertheless, said Hassan, "it gives me a partial satisfaction that I am doing something, however marginal it is, to correct an injustice."

For 6,000 years, Nubia bridged Africa and the Arab world, stretching for hundreds of miles along the Nile Valley from Aswan south into Sudan.

Though subordinate at times to Pharaonic Egypt, it evolved as a distinct and highly devel-

oped civilization known for centuries as the Kingdom of Kush. It was not until the 14th century, several hundred years after the rest of Egypt, that Nubia converted from Christianity to Islam.

The process of assimilation accelerated in this century, as many Nubian men moved to Cairo and other cities in search of work, often as doormen and domestic servants. Their wives and children, however, generally remained in ancestral villages seemingly untouched by time.

Perhaps a bit selectively, many recall their submerged homeland as a kind of Arcadia where fruits and vegetables sprang from the soil and class differences were forgotten as landowners sat down with laborers at mealtimes.

"The palm trees, the land, everything was very good," said Fawziyah Dahab, who lived with her parents, two brothers and two sisters in the Nubian village of Ballana.

"There was a big garden, and we had many rooms, a bedroom and a child's room and a place to make bread."

But in 1964, at age 10, Dahab left Ballana with her family for a resettlement area in the desert outside Kom

Ombo, Egypt, about 30 miles north of Aswan. She was one of about 50,000 Egyptian Nubians relocated to make way for the artificial lake that hacked up behind the high dam for more than 300 miles. A similar number of Sudanese Nubians were forced to leave their villages for an area hundreds of miles to the south.

"I wiped the Nubian villages, heritage and culture completely off the face of the Earth," said Hassan, who was jailed by Sudanese authorities in the early 1980s for organizing opposition to the dam. "The social fabric was completely torn apart."

Arriving in "New Nubia" outside Kom Ombo, the Egyptian Nubians were allocated concrete-block houses according to family size—a blow to wealthy landowners—and told to grow sugar cane rather than traditional crops. Owners of date palms were compensated at the rate of 10 piasters per tree—half at the time of settlement, half in seven years. The exodus of Nubian men to the cities accelerated.

"We were crying," Dahab recalled. "We were leaving our country... Here we have to buy everything ourselves, but there we used to make these

things."

A sturdy woman in a blue robe and traditional black headscarf, Dahab laments the inevitable weakening of Nubian culture.

"Our children are all speaking Arabic now," she said. "They understand Nubian, but they don't speak it."

But life in Aswan Ballana has its compensations, among them indoor plumbing and electricity—the latter since 1972—five primary schools and a new sports club with a soccer field and basketball court.

Many in the Nubian diaspora have thrived. Dahab's son, for example, works for a travel agency in Cairo, owns a car and returns on holidays to the village, where he stays in a three-room apartment attached to his mother's spacious home.

Even more striking is how Nubians have mimicked many features of their old communities. The drah government houses have acquired courtyards and extra rooms and are painted in traditional pastels. Refrigerators are supplemented with ceramic jars for storing dates and water.

"We didn't forget our past," said Mohammed Rashwan, 45, who greeted visitors with glasses of *abreh*, a traditional Nubian drink made from fruit juice and flour. Like many village men, Rashwan is a part-time resident, commuting between home and the prosperous food-export business he runs on Egypt's Red Sea coast near the border with Sudan.

The Egyptian government, eager to emphasize the homogeneity of its people, has been reluctant to encourage the promotion of a separate Nubian identity.

Ossama Abdel Meguid, director of Aswan's Nubia Museum, said he resents efforts by some African-American scholars to distinguish between the history of Nubia, which they consider a mostly African civilization, and that of Egypt. The two are bound inextricably together, he said.

"It's not separate, but it has very local features," said Abdel Meguid, who studied in the United States. "Nubians feel themselves a part of Egypt."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

The mystery of the glass diamonds

By Christian Tyler

TO CELEBRATE the birth of her daughter, Frederique Guillemard received a special present from her great aunt in France: a pair of pink stones, each about the size of a thumbnail, which had been handed down from Russian ancestors.

When the old lady died some years later, Guillemard decided to have the stones valued. With her husband Guy, she arranged to visit a director of De Beers' Central Selling Organisation in London.

There, she says, she was told by him and another expert that the polished, but unmounted stones were possibly rubies, but more probably pink diamonds of exceptional quality and value. Overjoyed, the couple took the stones home and put them in their bank.

A few days later a written estimate signed by the director arrived from De Beers, describing "two old mine cut fancy intense pink diamonds, weighing together 11.95 carats." It valued them at just under \$6 million.

Two weeks later, following De Beers' suggestion, the gems were transported by security van to the company's offices. They were in the sent on to the Gemological Institute of America, in New York, where they would be certified for quality prior to sale by auction.

That was a Friday. The following Friday, having heard nothing and becoming anxious, the Guillemards asked their solicitor to make inquiries.

Then came the bombshell. The stones had not been sent to New York, he was told. Instead, the box had been opened in London on Monday, the stones re-examined and found to be pieces of glass.

So began a fight lasting 7 years between the Guillemards and the most powerful organisation in the world diamond trade. First by negotiation through solicitors, later by issuing a writ in the High Court in London, the Guillemards struggled to win compensation for what they claimed was De Beers' negligent loss of their heirloom.

Now the case of the glass diamonds has been settled out of court. As is usual in such cases, both sides refuse to discuss the terms of the agreement. But it is believed the Guillemards have accepted a payment from De Beers sufficient at least to cover their legal costs. A sum of £250,000 whether additional compensation or not is unclear, was quoted by one City source.

If the case had come to trial the company would probably have argued that its two experts were never shown diamonds by the Guillemards. According to another version, its defence could have been that the so-called valuation was a precaution, a letter for insurance purposes only, needed while the stones were being sent away for formal inspection and grading. The couple's story was different.

They said they were told that although the stones might possibly be rubies worth about \$3.5m, they looked like almost flawless diamonds in which case they could fetch up to \$12m at auction.

De Beers further argued that the couple would not be able to prove they ever held diamonds. Jeremy Richdale, a director of the company's Central Selling Organisation, to whom the Guillemards first showed the stones, said last month: "There was an investigation at the time, and no action was taken as a result of that."

In answer to another question, he said there had been no managerial repercussions within the organisation after the incident. "There is no case in answer, and that is where it rests."

A company spokesman said De Beers had always denied liability, and had been prepared to defend itself at trial. He added: "We are happy to have been able to settle our differences with the Guillemards and to avoid any further substantial costs of litigation."

Because of its enormous influence over the trade in rough diamonds, De Beers is reluctant to have its business aired in court. ■

Financial Times Syndication

Wow, what a car concept!

By Paul Dean

THEY WERE our 1950s dream cars, wheels we couldn't buy because they were visions from designers' imaginations gone amok. But, went the general message of those times and auto shows, see yourself driving this flamed thing with clipped wings, and know you are dealing with a company reaching for the future. Meanwhile, how about \$500 down on this 1957 Bel-Air?

Today they are called concept cars. The Isuzu Zaccar and the Jeep Tabasco are less outlandish, more realistic. Most concept cars have engines, they move, have pulled back from being way out there, and no longer are Fiberglas art forms. See them as today's advanced adventures in tomorrow's styling—and test beds for maturing technology in search of mass appeal.



The playful Jeep Tabasco. Photo by Bob Carey.

Including a 25-horsepower sedan that looks like a Quonset hut and is made from recycled pop bottles.

And know that almost all of the dozen concept cars that strutted their twinkling stuff last week at the Greater Los Angeles Auto Show could see production in a year or three. Which means the annual extravaganza of automotive gleamings and Turtle Wax is a 760,000-square-foot sales clinic, a 10-day test kitchen and a 750,000-consumer focus group.

"I would say much less than 10 percent of the mechanicals and styling of the early dream cars transferred to production cars," says John Moss, director of concept designs for Chevrolet—although he admits that curved windshields, tail fins, concealed headlights, power windows and the death of running boards were in that percentage.

"Today, at least with our cars, we're saying: 'Here's what you can do to your car, and here's what we can sell to you if you approve.'"

So, if the public approves, there will be a Chevrolet Malibu Sport or a Cavalier Technic in its future.

"We're hoping the public will make a good business case for the production of both cars," says Carl Sheffer of Chevrolet. "Odds are good for the Malibu because we already know there's interest out there for a sportier version with a 238-horsepower engine, a five-speed and styling accents in the image of the Impala SS of the '60s and '70s."

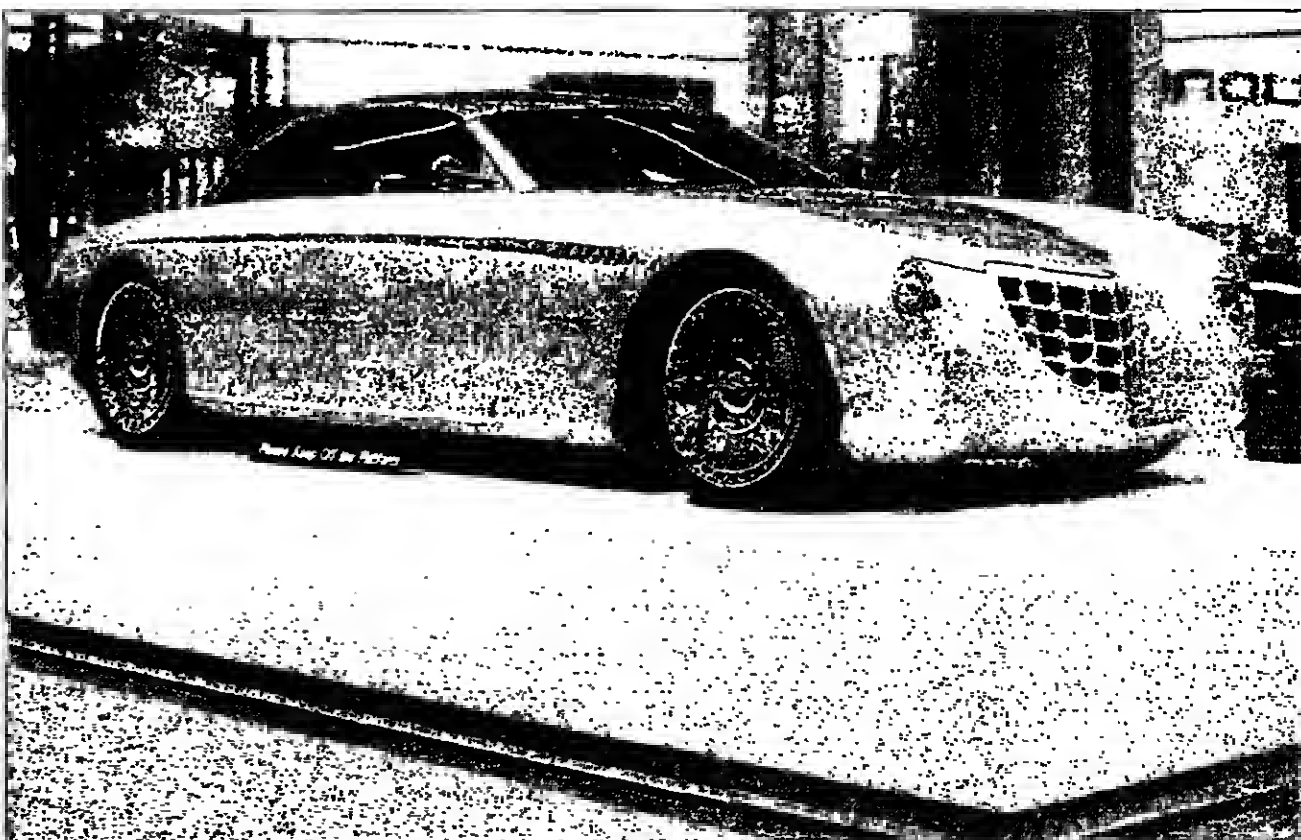
Appeal of the Cavalier Technic veers into quite a different direction, toward today's junior and mostly Asian hot rod hobbyists, who squeeze quarts of startling performance from pint pot Honda Accords and Acura Integras.

Hair on the chest of the Technic will come from a huge exhaust pipe, Corvette disc brakes, a lowered and tightened suspension and a 258-horsepower engine. Authenticity is taken to the last exposed rivet on a fully functional, bare aluminum air scoop in the hood.

Modern concept cars pointing at the next generation, and not at some far frontier, have an enviable track record. Dodge Viper, originally an experiment sniffing for any interest in over-muscled sports cars, was a 1992 concept car. Plymouth Prowler, currently in production as a retro-spective hot rod, was unveiled as a concept car at the 1993 North American Auto Show in Detroit.

Chrysler's long-bodied Phaeton is another exploration in progress. It is powered by a 425-horsepower V-12 engine, rides on 22-inch wheels, displays Art Deco lines and instruments and breathes Bugatti and the Touring '30s from every hand-rubbed pore. See Phaeton traces in this year's full-size sedans from Chrysler, the Concorde, Dodge Intrepid, Eagle Vision and luxury Chrysler LHS. "You'll see nothing specific," comments Chrysler's Kari St. Antoine. "Just that long, elegant, visionary stance."

As did Plymouth with the Prowler, so Lexus is seeing how deep the hot rod



The Chrysler Phaeton has influenced the car maker's designs. Photo by Bob Carey.

waters run with a replica 1932 Ford coupe, surrounding a 300-horsepower V-8 from the GS400 sedan. Mercedes-Benz is playing with a Life Jet three-wheeler and researching the geometry of a suspension tilting into turns for improved cornering ability and stability. Jeep is wondering if customers of its GI-based Wrangler would be interested in the Dakar, a stretched, leather-lined, wood-paneled Ritz-Carlton limited edition.

Want brute force? There's the Ford Mustang Super Stallion, with a 545-horsepower engine and a top speed of 175 mph.

Want green? The hybrid Honda J-VX concept coupe has electric motors assisted by a three-cylinder gasoline engine.

Want nonsense? Chrysler is displaying a two-cylinder, bare-bones bubble car that looks as comfortable as burlap underwear. It should sell for \$19.95 through Wal-Mart stores. It has a rollback canvas lid, slide-up windows and a manual transmission with a push-pull-twist shift pattern. Chrysler calls it CCV.

The initials stand for Composite Concept Vehicle, because it is built by thermoplastic injection molding. It gets 50 miles per gallon, probably would cost \$6,000, and is 100 percent recyclable back into pop bottles.

"This is a vehicle that's designed to specifically meet the needs of the emerging middle class in developing countries," says

Francois Castaing, a Chrysler vice president. "Our initial direction was to develop a car as easy to assemble as a toy."

Want more cute and thoughtful? Isuzu has the Zaccar, an ultimate sport-utility based on the Amigo. The rear deck is wide and open for carrying camping gear. It comes with Global Positioning Satellite navigation, and a passenger side third door.

"Our advanced design people put everything they could think of on this vehicle, because they don't work under any marketing restraints," says Bryon Farnsworth of Isuzu. "Then the price and marketing people step in and start whacking everything off."

And so it has always been. In 1938, when Harley Earl birthed the first dream car, it was a 20-foot Buick called the Y-Job. The power top, electric windows and low silhouette were among its few pieces deemed practical, affordable and salvageable.

The 1955 Cadillac Le Mans was designed as a two-seater luxury sports car. It didn't fly—not until 30 years later, when Cadillac built the two-seater luxury Allante.

Only one vehicle went effortlessly, totally from dream car to American icon: The 1953 Chevrolet Corvette. "I saw most of these dream cars when they toured with the GM Motoramas in the '50s," recalls Ken Gross, director of the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles.

"They formed a technology and style show where the basic message was: When futuristic cars are built, GM will build them."

"During this unique period in American automotive history, car shows were still the stuff of fantasy art, and Detroit encouraged stylists and engineers to turn their dreams into reality. It was a simpler time, when America was king, the future was bright and there were no limits on imagination. Kids grew up with visions of a jet age on wheels, with tail fins and bubble tops."

Then we all grew up. The public no longer could be fooled by size, chrome and what it might not be driving decades from 1956. Portholes died, sizzle fizzled and practicalities prevailed.

"Now, we don't build a concept car that we can't put into production," says Steve Kerho, a product planner for Isuzu. "Otherwise it is art for art's sake. We have to look at these shows as forums, maybe spending \$1 million to build a show car ... but also getting some feedback."

But was the \$75 million that Plymouth spent on the Prowler worth its weight in feedback?

"As a product planner," said an admiring Kerho, "I look at that, and say it was money well spent." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Inter.Con holds training workshop

● Within the context of the training and development plan for the staff of Jordan Inter-Continental, a workshop on management skills ended last week. Staff from the Amra Hotel and the Petra Forum Hotel also attended the workshop.



Contemporary Calligraphy shows richness of Arab language

By Kofi Attah
Special to The Star

Arabic calligraphy is an elegant art of writing. It's full of skills and anticipation and occupied the attention of millions of Muslims and Western scholars over thousands of years.

The multi-dimensional art exhibition organized by the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association

of Amman under the theme "Week Of Plastic Arts" unearthed the hidden skills and forgotten riches of Arab inscription. "This is the second year that we hold such a Week," commented Khalid Khreis, president of the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association.

"This year we have focused on both old and contemporary Arab Artists," he added.

Dr. Khreis, a renowned Jordanian artist holding a Phd in fine arts from Barcelona University

in Spain, is the brains behind the annual Week. The objective of holding such an event is to bring Arab calligraphy by various artists from different Arab countries together and to bring new perspectives on this form of art.

The Week which featured the works of more than 40 artists from the Arab World, ended recently in the Royal Cultural Center.

Besides the paintings that were hanging on the walls of the exhibition hall of the RCC, calligraphies in slides were screened at the studio of the Cultural Center. The festival of Arab calligraphy was multi dimensional. It included lectures, debates, and musical manifestation, providing a platform for artists, art lovers and experts the



opportunity to interact.

Finally, the screen and projector the festival organizers brought to the Royal Cultural Center sent home the message they intended to put across. The screening showed outstanding Islamic calligraphy by such artists as Ahmad Mustapha of Egypt, whose "Laa Illaha Illa Allah" (There is no deity but God) was a masterpiece and rare to come by.

The Sudanese Ahmad Shihreen's "Allahu Noor" (God is light) inscribed on a round board portrays an ancient Arab mode of writing and an inspiration of the artist based on his African background.

The work of Shaker Hassan Al Said of Iraq beamed to the audience an excellent piece of art, acclaimed not only in the Arab world but also in London.

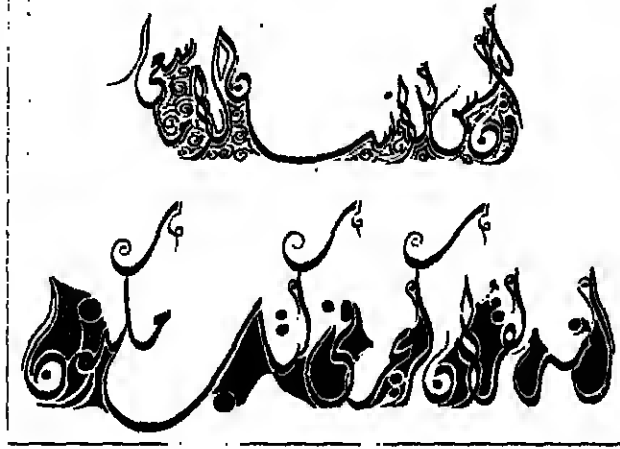
"We wanted to have a program with enough variety to cover a wide area and include more artists this year," says Dr. Khreis. And this is

what happened. The range of artists was wide and comprehensive, affording the audience the chance to enjoy the best of Arab calligraphy throughout the ages.

The rarity of those works and techniques involved provides and promotes a unique opportunity to relive a proud heritage. The rare inscription of Arab characters demonstrated by Mahjub Ben Bella of Algeria is a job of undisputed testimony.

One of the finest works shown was that of the Jordanian Rafik Laham, combining inspiration and reality. Another noticeable feature was that despite the similarity in the message they sought to convey, the Week portrayed a rich array of Arab talent that displayed individualism and identity like of those the Tunisian Najah Mahdawi.

The Week served as both a mind opener and a door opener to further explore the rare realm of Arab calligraphy. ■



Sabah Fakhri more than matches the young singers of today

By Star Staff Writer

Ask a question about famous Arab musicians, and you can be sure that the name Sabah Fakhri will reverberate on everyone's lips. Indeed, he is one of the Arab world's greatest contemporary musicians. More than 50 years in show business, Sabah Fakhri has built a distinctive musical school of thought.

What is interesting is that such a school seeks to expose traditional Arabic music, *umashat* is only apart of this trend and Sabah Fakhri will go down in history alongside with famous names as Munir Bashir, Mohammad Abdel Wahab, Reyad Al Sunhat and Sayeed Darweesh.

Today, Sabah Fakhri continues to hold his own in the face of stiff competition from what is being dubbed as the music of the younger generation. However, and although in his early '70s, his brand of music continues to be loved by both old and young, males and females, fathers and grandfathers.

The first fan club for traditional music was formed in Egypt, and the Syrian singer was in Cairo recently to see the inauguration. Fakhri says the aim of the fan club is to develop an "appreciation for tradition and heritage as well as the collection of all music within this framework."

His *umashat* is a source of inspiration for many up and coming young artists who want to go into this tough field which requires stamina and perseverance. The field of *umashat* is difficult because

of the long hours of practice that is required.

In this respect, Sabah Fakhri is a natural. He gets up on stage and seem to perform effortlessly. It's as if he is made for this type of musical interludes. The strength of his voice, combined with his strong musical chords makes him a formidable force. He can and frequently does sing for hours on end and without the slightest touch of a break in the voice.

"He can more than match his rivals," is a frequently heard phrase. One story told by a member of his orchestra during his last concert at the Jeresh Festival was "that he continued to sing right till sun rise, at a moment when all the other singers gave up and snoring on the couch." The evening was an informal gathering in Beirut and included such famous names as Milhem Barakat.

His voice is indeed, extraordinary. He says that he very carefully takes care of his voice. "I stay away from things which may scratch the throat and effect the voice," and these include "hot chillies, peppers, fried food and cold drinks."

But that's not all. He is extremely particular about his diet. He says that before each concert he shys away from food that are likely to affect his vocal chords. These include dairy products and lettuce. However, he takes a cup of tea or herbs or a plain warm cup of water to relieve his throat.

He sang in the Jeresh Festival on a number of occasions, and each time he gave a concert, he brought the house down. ■



Profiler back on the case and Union Square premiere on Orbit's America plus

THE NEW chill-factor plunging series of psycho-crime thriller **PROFILER** and two all-new hit comedies are premiering on the widely viewed **America Plus** channel. Vignette-rich **UNION SQUARE** and **WORKING**, a guide to corporate pantomime, are among the channel's extraordinary program line-up.

When asked to comment on the series, Profiler creator Cynthia Saunders said, "It is not about killing as much as it is about the behavioral pattern that's expressed in a crime." It's also about one of the special individuals who devote their sometimes unique, possibly paranormal, skills and professional lives to public safety by tracking down and placing the homicidal criminals—now commonly known as serial-killers—in indefinite quarantine. **America Plus** premieres **Profiler** on Wednesdays at 8:00 PM (GMT time).

From the creators of **Caroline in the City** comes **Union Square** (Thursdays at 6:30 GMT), the game of a bustling downtown New York City diner. So what sort of favours wait through the place? Says executive producer Marco Pennette, "It's a way station for people pursuing their dreams. Tom Cruise waited tables. David Mamet still writes his plays at a booth in his local coffee shop."

Amongst the sundry mix of characters frequenting the diner and each other's lives are spunky Broadway-besotted actress Gabriella (Constance Marie), the diner's say-it-as-it-is proprietor Vince (Jeffrey Anderson-Guster, *Hudson Street*) and running-on-empty night-waiter Able (Jonathan Slavia, *Caroline in the City*). ■

SCRAPBOOK

By Christian Doumit

Age shall not wither.....

IF AS the old song goes "Little Things Mean a Lot" there are many big things that mean little. Turning 60 is one of them and if this is happening to you, it isn't such a big deal and you shouldn't let it worry you. Just because Mozart, Schubert, Alexander the Great, and Joan of Arc didn't even get near this ripe old age doesn't mean that those of us who have are all-out good for nothing. Such men and women must die young to bequeath to the world the legacy of youth incarnate. I know many who turned 60 and never had a clue. But there are others like King Juan Carlos—who celebrated his 60th this month, King Hussein, and Nelson Mandela that can be as beautiful as only youth can be, free and full of the natural solemnity of unspoiled idealism.

Indeed, it is even better than that. Being 60 years old means that one grew up in the fifties without television, but watched instead black and white movies which had a reverence for good taste, good manners, and intelligence. On screen Rita Hayworth, Greta Garbo and Ingrid Bergman were beautiful and dignified unlike slob like Madonna. Except for Nikita and the bomb everything then was light-hearted and falling in love with older women was ecstatic. In those days women wore black fishnet stockings that never failed to excite. The emotional and sexual awakening of an adolescent by an older woman is a dramatic experience. But this is another story.....

Now, back to serious stuff. In Washington, General Dwight Eisenhower occupied the White House, and in Buenos Aires, General Juan Domingo Peron, the Pink House, while General de Gaulle and General Franco governed from Paris and Madrid respectively. General Franco is perhaps one of the greatest men to rule in the 20th century. After seizing power in the Spanish Civil War, he restored the monarchy to its rightful place. In Beirut, Camille Chamoun lived at the Presidential Palace. In those days, Lebanon prospered and was respected by the international community, and the Lebanese were not so busy chasing after Green Cards. All these leaders were men of vision who managed to keep the peace for a season.

There was no such nonsense then as a Bill Clinton and Paula Jones. Even his predecessor Jack Kennedy—at the height of the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis—made sure that the Secret Service was there to protect him from being caught naked with Fiddle and Faddle in the White House swimming pool. That's what I call style. As Giovanni Agnelli would say years later: "A man can be a good husband and have mistresses. And it's better for a woman to have one tenth of a good man than the whole of a lousy one." Besides, if Jack Kennedy had not been so occupied having a good time with women but instead busy in political posturing and intensive diplomacy with the Soviets, who knows if the outcome wouldn't have been a nuclear holocaust between the United States and the Soviet Union?

Almost 50 years ago Iraq, Iran, Libya and Egypt were all monarchies making slow but perceptible economic progress and sensible use of oil revenues. The overthrowing of monarchies and the establishment of dictatorships have left those countries what they are today.

It is a supreme irony that Jordan—the most vulnerable of the lot, especially after losing the West Bank—has managed to remain stable and make progress. Thank God for the Hashemite dynasty.

It is a saddening thought that the gracious world of the 1950's is no longer with us. Ah... well, we might as well accept it and really try to have a good time for rest of our lives.

Meanwhile to those celebrating their 60th, particularly to the duke of Makkah, happy birthday! ■

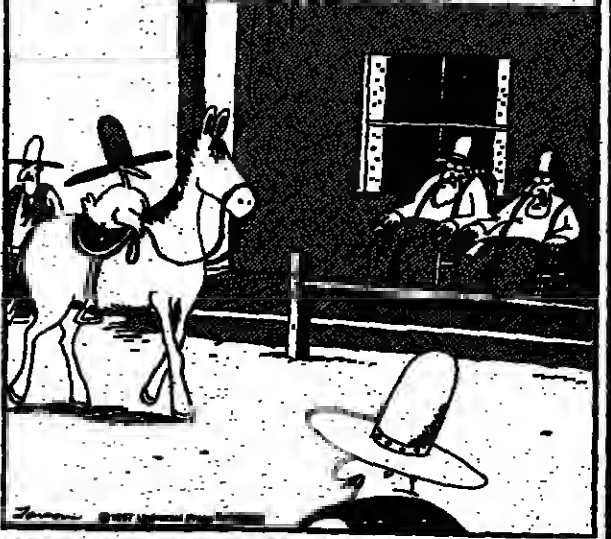
THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



To the horror of the lifeboat's other members, Madonna loses her balance and falls on her face.

GENERAL STORE



"Somethin's up, Jed... That's Ben Potter's horse, all right, but ain't that Henry Morgan's chicken ridin' him?"

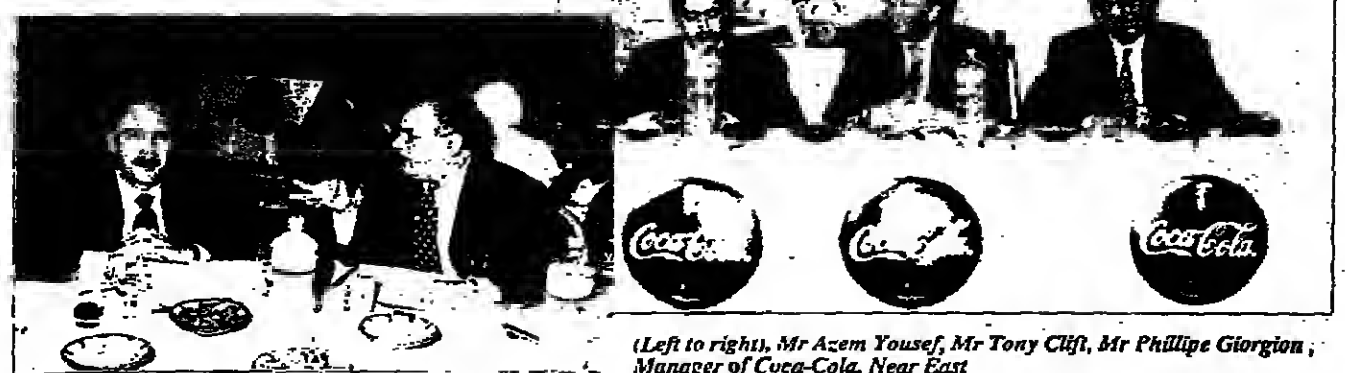
Coca-Cola Jordan holds Ramadan Night

THE COCA Cola Company in Jordan held a "Ramadan Night" for its employees at Le Meridien Hotel last week. The get-together was attended by company employees in Jordan, as well as some figures from the Coca-Cola Company in the region.

Mr Azem Omar Yousef, Manager of the Coca-Cola Company in Jordan, started-off the evening by welcoming the guests and expressing his gratitude in the company employees in Jordan whose hard work and dedication helped achieve award-winning results in 1997. He also expressed his optimism for the coming year and what it might hold for the Company and its employees.

Mr Tony Cliff, Coca-Cola Vice President of Finance for the Middle East and North Africa Region, also welcomed the guests and re-introduced them to the Coca-Cola system worldwide, and emphasized the importance of keeping communication lines open between the company and its employees in order to achieve the best result in product and services.

The Coca-Cola Company is the largest distributor of soft drinks in the world, with distribution networks in more than 200 countries worldwide. ■



(Left to right), Mr Azem Yousef, Mr Tony Cliff, Mr Philippe Giorgion, Manager of Coca-Cola, Near East

مستأمنه

The Star's TV GUIDE

Programs on JTV
from 24 — 30 January

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Twinkle
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—NBA Games
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—You Bet Your Life
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Perspective
8:00—Cinema Cinema
8:30—Prism
9:10—Time Trax
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: *Born to be Sold*
12:00—Country Music
12:30—Islam in a Changing World

SUNDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—The Pink Panther
2:15—Johnny Quest
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Energy Express
5:30—Tartan
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—America's Funniest People
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Black Hat Chef
8:00—Dadd's Army
8:30—Killing for a Living
9:10—Renegade
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—North & South
11:10—Jewel in the Crown
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

MONDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Hannerman
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Riding High



The Health Show, Monday at 7:35 pm

5:30—Animal Show
6:00—Neighbors
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Hope & Gloria
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—The Health Show
8:00—Over A Cup of Tea
8:30—Country Music
9:10—Highlander
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Emergency Room (ER)
11:15—Cosmos (Doc.)
12:00—Islam in a Changing World

TUESDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Sandocan
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Skippy
5:30—Square One TV

WEDNESDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Johnny Quest
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Border Town
5:30—The Finder
6:00—Neighbors

THURSDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—My Little Fairy Tale
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—NBA Games
6:00—Prince & The Pauper
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Big Brother Jake
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Black Hat Chef
8:00—Over A Cup of Tea
8:30—Lois & Clark
9:10—The Oprah Winfrey
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: *Thicker than Blood*
12:00—Music Show
12:30—Islam in a Changing World

FRIDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Rumpin'
2:30—French Programs
4:15—Prayers (Link with Ch.1)
4:30—Believe & Behave
5:00—Wishbone
5:30—Metro Café
6:30—News Headlines
6:35—Small Talk
7:00—News in French
7:15—Ramadan Tales
7:35—Life on the Internet
8:00—Friends

8:30—Brisco County
9:10—Knife to the Heart
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Streets of Larido
11:30—Feature Film
1:00—Islam in a Changing World

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS SAMEDI

2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Cajun
4:00—Magazine
L'œil de Colomb

DIMANCHE

2:30—Micro Kids
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Magazine
Fait pas rêver
4:00—Le Tour de France

LUNDI

2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Thalassa
4:00—Magazine scientifique
Cinq sur cinq

MARDI

2:30—Bêtes pas Bêtes
2:45—Extra large
3:00—Savoir plus santé
4:00—E = M6

MERCREDI

12:00—Les aventures de Baron
2:30—Chiens de vie

JEUDI

1:30—Histoire de clowns
2:30—Faites la fête

VENDREDI

12:00—Tintin
2:30—Les trois frères
24:00—Surprise party

Programs are subject to change by JTV

Amman cinemas

- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): Romeo * Juliet
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): Jack
- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): Bulletproof
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): The Peacemaker
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): Nothing to Lose
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): Riding High
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): Mr. Bean

FILM

The latest James Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*, opened gracefully in Los Angeles last December. Top international stars were on the scene

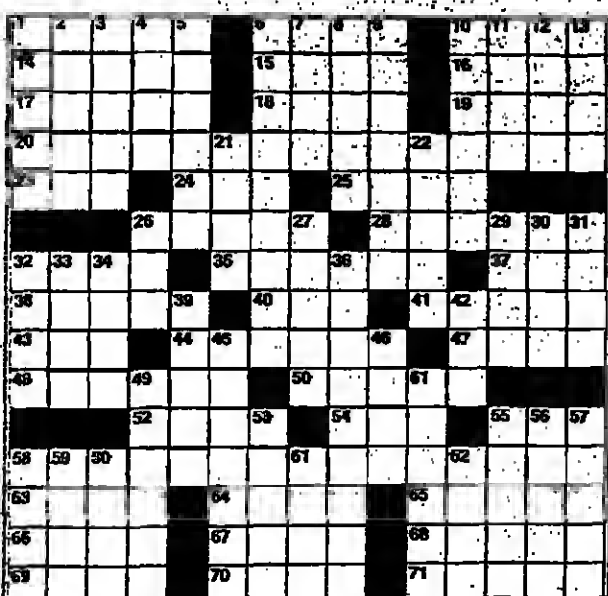


Up: Pierce Brosnan and wife
Left: Michelle Yeon
Right: Lawrence Fishburn
Dawn: Claudia Schiffer



Up: Teri Hatcher and John Teni
Right: Jonathan Price and wife

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS
1 Gutter sound
8 Knocks
10 Bandy words
14 Slip
15 Throw off
16 Johnny cake
17 Advocating
18 copied
19 principles
20 Celebrate
21 Supper
22 Effort
24 Le Duc, of
25 Gaudin
26 Beatles
28 Cook
32 Singer
35 Selma
37 Gutter
38 Flavor
40 Native of
41 Carnivore
43 Nonsense
44 Next to
47 Test
48 Religious
50 Park Co.
52 Vices
54 Heavy
55 Branch
56 Flag colors
63 Desert
64 Bring up
65 Pests
66 Mineral
67 Orient
68 English
69 Equal
70 The...
71 Poor
72 Arizona town
73 Indict, as
74 Musical
75 Shaw
76 Lunchtime
77 Cave
78 Captain fish
79 French island
80 Bean
81 Arose
82 Column or
83 Inferior
84 Part of A.M.
85 Study
86 Commandment
87 United
88 Kingdom
89 Infants
90 Barrier
91 If you know
92 Author Haley
93 Actress
94 Rowlands
95 Yellow
96 Cheese
97 Cupid
98 The two
99 Songbirds
100 Disconcert
101 man
102 (sympathetic)
103 Bedtime
104 007's school
105 Restaurant
106 counter
107 Arose
108 Minister
109 show
110 T-bone
111 Start style
112 Covered
113 Unity
114 Incite
115 Ahab's
116 tale
117 Mirror kin
118 Free from
119 worry
120 Poison

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—THIS WEEK'S— HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: Quick thinking and action will be required for almost everyone, especially Cancers and Capricorns. There will be lots of work to do.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Something you've wanted for the home could happen. Romance looks promising, but you keep getting separated. Persevere.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). These are good days for establishing a house policy you can live with. Save time for romance. You may be tempted to spend too much.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). There's money coming. Save as much as possible. Clean house. You could get lucky with a pernickety person. Shop and relax with loved ones.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You're drawing attention, most of it positive. Make shopping lists and spend, after you know how much you've got. Cram as many details as possible into your brain.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Rumors abound. Some of them may be true. Be careful what you say. You have an advantage with the moon in your sign. Don't blow it by getting cocky.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). A loved one's insights will help you understand a friend better. Comply with bureaucratic demands. It's hard to get together with a partner, but things work out.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Use new skills to solve a domestic problem. Interaction with friends leads to an unusual decision. Your experience is important, so contribute it. A private meeting helps with an important choice.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Contact with a foreigner could be expensive. Use a delay to your advantage. Think about what you're doing before making a decision. The coast should be clear soon. A friendly exchange turns romantic.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Pay off a debt. Distant contacts lead to new opportunities. You'll do well in sports, so challenge somebody. Your sweetheart is interrogating you. Make sure you have the right answers.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Pay attention to a partner. You may be apart, but it's important to stay tuned in. Fools and their money are soon parted. Something old works better than something new. Take notes.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Partners can handle an assignment. Tell them what's needed. Take a friend's advice to understand a difficult person.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Friendship leads to love though it's hard to get together. Accept unwelcome financial advice. Let a Virgo get you organized and you'll have more time to play.

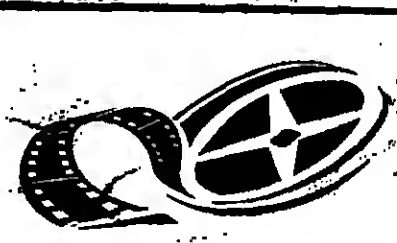
If You're Having a Birthday This Week: You're strong this year, but you'll be stronger yet when you learn to work with a gentle partner. You want nothing but the best this year, and that could get real expensive.

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SLAPSTIX
Show me a good loser,
and I'll show you
an idiot!

MOOVIES

ARDOON
GALLERIA
THEATRES



TONIGHT

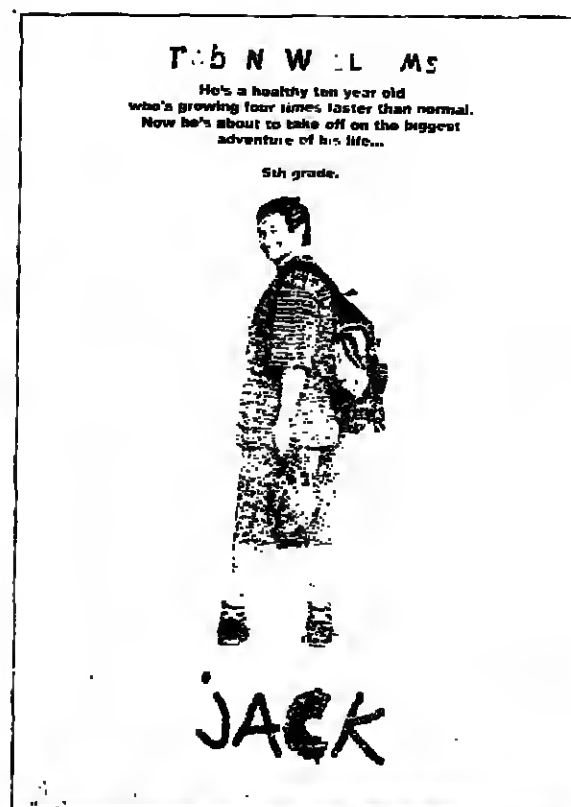
GALLERIA 1 هاتف خلوي ٧٩٩٣٤٣٠٠ GALLERIA 2

ROMEO JULIET

رومين و جولييت
JACK



2:00 / 6:30 / 8:30 / 10:30



2:00 / 6:30 / 8:30 / 10:30

The Star
Online

<http://www.arabia.com/Star>

٢٢٠١٩٩٩٩

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Religion

Le ramadan joue collectif

Ouvre l'aspect religieux, le mois saint des musulmans consacre une série de rites, dont le fameux iftar, qui permet de resserrer les liens de la communauté.

«Mangez et buvez jusqu'à ce que l'on puisse distinguer à l'obscurité le fil blanc d'un fil noir. Jetez ensuite jusqu'à la nuit, pressez le Coran. Ramadan : la prière du jour, le lever au coucher du soleil, l'exercice quotidien qui s'impose à tous les musulmans valides et en bonne santé. Le ramadan, c'est :

- le quatrième des cinq piliers de l'islam avec la *Shahada*, c'est-à-dire la profession de foi, les cinq prières, l'aumône et le pèlerinage à la Mecque. Le jeûne est donc une obligation religieuse qu'il convient de respecter et d'accomplir. L'islam exempte de cette obligation les malades, les voyageurs, les femmes enceintes ou celles qui ont leurs règles. Mais dans ces cas-là, il faut compenser les jours

manqués en jeûnant ultérieurement, en faisant la charité ou en offrant à manger aux pauvres.

- un mois de recueillement et de piété.
- un mois sacré avec une nuit sacrée au cours de laquelle Dieu a révélé le Coran à son prophète Mohammad. Appelée *Al-Qadr*, cette nuit intervient l'un des jours impairs dans le dernier tiers du ramadan. Après la dernière prière (*Isha*) et jusqu'à l'aube, les musulmans se consacrent à la prière et à la lecture du Coran parce que selon le texte sacré cette nuit vaut mille mois.
- un mois d'égalité car il incite la volonté divine de placer tous les musulmans, riches et pauvres, présidents et subalternes sur le même plan.
- un mois de solidarité. Les

gens sont censés s'entraider, les riches distribuer de la nourriture aux pauvres. Les liens familiaux et sociaux se resserrant avec les repas collectifs, les visites et les veillées.

Pendant une trentaine de jours, les musulmans vivent un bouleversement total de leur quotidien. « Ramadan est une bonne occasion de sortir de la routine », se réjouissent beaucoup. Ils apprennent en particulier « les nouvelles habitudes gastronomiques et l'adhésion de la journée de travail ».

À l'approche de l'iftar, le premier repas de la journée, autour de la table, tout le monde guette l'appel à la prière de *Maghrib* ou le coup de canon (*Al-Madhin*) qui annonce la fin de l'interdit. Immuant le prophète Mohammad, on commence par les dattes. Dans les mosquées, les pieux et les pauvres sont accueillis aux *maïdats Al-Rahman* (les tables des miséricordieux) : un iftar assuré par le ministère des Affaires religieuses ou des associations de bienfaisance.

Après la rupture du jeûne, les croyants se rendent à la mosquée à l'appel de la dernière prière (*Isha*) suivie de *Tarawih* qui est une prière spéciale pour le ramadan. Le soir, la ville retrouve la vie : boutiques ouvertes, promeneurs allégres et cafés bondés. « Ces soirées permettent la récréation et le délasserment après une longue journée de prière et de travail. Et puis on se réunit avec des parents et des amis qu'on ne voit pas souvent », insistent plusieurs vieillards. De plus, la municipalité d'Amman organise chaque semaine des soirées religieuses. A Shmeisani par exemple, des congrégations se rassemblent pour chanter des louanges au son des tambours.

Prières, palabres et réjouissances jusqu'à l'heure du coucher, juste avant l'aube, le deuxième repas que prennent les musulmans pour se préparer à une autre journée de jeûne. ■

Nahed Al-Khloof

Le destin bouleversé d'Iraq al Amir par Véronique Abu-Nijmeh

Au sortir du valon de Wadi Sir, à 17 km au sud-ouest d'Amman se trouve le site d'Iraq al Amir, l'unique vestige hellénistique des environs d'Amman. Il s'agit d'un manoir du II^e siècle av. J.-C., établi sur le vaste domaine des Tobiades, famille qui gouverna Amman au cours du III^e siècle pour le compte de la Perse d'abord, de l'Égypte ensuite. Pittoresque, l'édifice a aujourd'hui fière allure, avec ses colonnades reconstruites et ses murs aux blocs de pierre massifs. Mais derrière le tableau magistral de ce monument se dissimule l'histoire d'un projet effondré, d'une ambition jamais réalisée.

Nous sommes dans les premières années du II^e siècle av. J.-C. Les Séleucides tiennent sous leur contrôle la région de Syrie-Palestine qu'ils ont naguère élevée aux Lagides d'Égypte. C'est alors que le dernier représentant de la famille des Tobiades, entreprend la construction d'une



résidence dont l'importance dépassait celle d'un simple habitat. Hyrcan semble en effet avoir songé à constituer sur le domaine de ses pères une petite principauté plus ou moins indépendante dans le manoir devait être le centre. Ses aspirations transparaissent dans les sculptures de lions et d'aigles, animaux royaux par excellence, destinées à orner les façades. Mais Hyrcan heurte à l'intransigeance du roi Antiochos IV, au point qu'il est finalement contraint de se donner la mort, en 175 av. J.-C. Le manoir reste inachevé, sans portes ni fenêtres, sans toiture ni plancher. Abandonné pendant environ 500 ans, il ne fut aménagé en habitat que tardivement avant d'être détruit par un violent séisme en 365 de notre ère. Rien dans le spectacle grandiose de ce site ne laisse deviner le destin malheureux de cet édifice qui dut attendre jusqu'à nos jours pour connaître, grâce à sa résurrection archéologique, son heure de gloire. ■

Emploi

Travailleurs étrangers : trois ans pour rien

En 1995, le gouvernement a pris des mesures pour limiter la main d'œuvre étrangère en Jordanie et combattre, selon lui, le chômage. Trois ans plus tard, quel est le bilan de cette politique autoritaire ?



Chaque matin des dizaines de travailleurs étrangers se rassemblent devant la mosquée Al-Husseini en Basse-ville en attendant d'être embauchés au pied levé pour la journée.

Il y avait en 1995 350.000 travailleurs étrangers, toutes nationalités et tous types d'emplois confondus, selon le ministère du travail. Sur ce total, 250.000 étaient considérés comme « superflus ». Le gouvernement décida alors de prendre certaines mesures pour réduire le nombre de travailleurs étrangers dans le pays et le problème du chômage n'est pas résolu. En 1997, le gouvernement a accordé davantage de permis de travail aux étrangers qu'en 1995 et 1996 : 130.000 contre 94.000 en 1995 et 43.000 en 1996. La hausse de 1996 correspond « à une application stricte des dispositions gouvernementales, qui n'ont cependant pas résolu le problème du travail illégal. En 1997, le gouvernement a donc décidé de régulariser la situation d'un grand nombre de travailleurs étrangers en situation irrégulière. Comme l'admettait fin dernier, le ministre des Affaires

étrangères, « les délais de grâce jacobins aux étrangers pour régulariser leur situation ou quitter le pays ne sont pas efficaces. Il vaut mieux délivrer des permis valides et faciliter leur renouvellement ». Selon le ministère du travail, le nombre de travailleurs étrangers en 1998 sera sensiblement le même qu'en 1997.

Le gouvernement ne s'est pas donné les moyens d'appliquer les nouvelles décisions de manière globale. Les sanctions ne sont guère dissuasives.

« Les employeurs qui enfreignent les décisions gouvernementales sont menacés de contraventions d'un montant minimum de 52 JD et risquent une condamnation pénale immédiate », explique Bahjat Quteishat, directeur du bureau de l'emploi au ministère du travail. Dans les faits, les tribunaux n'infligent pas d'amendes supérieures au montant minimum. Ni retraits de permis, ni peines de prison ne sont envisagés, ce qui n'est pas de nature à décourager les employeurs. Même les étrangers qui ont fait l'objet d'un arrêté d'expulsion (10.000 à l'heure actuelle) continuent de vivre en Jordanie. « Il est souvent impossible de contrôler les allées et venues des travailleurs étrangers », les Égyptiens et les Syriens ou les pèlerins qui transitent par la Jordanie n'ont pas besoin de visa.

En réalité, le pays a toujours besoin de ces travailleurs étrangers particulièrement dans les secteurs de l'agriculture, des services, de la construction et de la boulangerie, secteurs auxquels les dispositions gouvernementales ne s'appliquent pas.

Même dans certains secteurs qui leur sont théoriquement fermés, comme l'enseignement supérieur, on a toujours recours à des professeurs étrangers. « À l'Université Al-Bayt par exemple, la faculté d'économie ne compte que trois Jordaniens sur 30 professeurs, les autres venant d'autres pays arabes, surtout de l'Iraq », indique Ahmad Rifai, directeur du service d'orientation de l'Université. Par ailleurs, d'autres métiers sont frappés par ce qu'on appelle la « culture de l'indignité », à savoir le refus de beaucoup de Jordaniens d'exercer certains métiers, jugés honteux. Ces postes sont du coup occupés par des étrangers. C'est pour toutes ces raisons que les mesures du gouvernement ne remportent pas le succès escompté.

Les seuls effets positifs des dispositions gouvernementales semblent en fin de compte se résumer à un encaissement juridique plus précis de problèmes non résolus (chômage, immigration clandestine) et à la régularisation du marché du travail, à quoi s'ajoutent les rentrées financières liées à la

Honteux, indigne

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Les tâches les plus ingrates sont souvent délaissées par les Jordaniens.

Mona Qaddoumi

Non au jeûne !

Peut-on être musulman et ne pas respecter le ramadan ? Oui. Ils sont ainsi nombreux « et certainement plus qu'on ne croit » à fumer, boire voire manger en pleine journée. Généralement leur entourage familial ou professionnel est tolérant. Mais attention, ils se gardent de toute provocation dans la rue. Ils savent que, pris en flagrant délit, ils peuvent se retrouver en prison jusqu'à la fin du mois saint. Certains ont accepté, parfois sous couvert d'anonymat, de donner leur avis sur ce ramadan qu'ils ne suivent pas.

O. : « Ma vie reste la même malgré le ramadan. Je mange le midi et au moment de l'iftar. Mais j'essaie de ne pas heurter, de respecter les autres et de ne pas manger devant mes collègues (...). À l'origine, il s'agit de jeûner et aussi de manger modérément. Or la plupart des gens mangent cinq fois plus qu'à l'accoutumée. »

Samaa : « Je n'ai pas besoin du ramadan pour prouver que je suis quelqu'un de bien. Beaucoup de gens ne font pas le ramadan mais ont honte de le dire. Je pense qu'ils ont peur parce que leur comportement va à l'encontre de la société, à l'encontre de ce que tout le monde fait. Ce n'est pas mon cas. Je ne le fais pas sur les toilettes mais si on me le demande, je ne vais pas mentir. Ces interdits me choquent. Surtout vis-à-vis des chrétiens, ce n'est pas juste pour eux. Il faut respecter la religion mais on peut le faire sans l'imposer aux autres. »

Hani : « Je ne crois pas en Dieu donc je ne suis pas le ramadan. Cela ne dérange ni mes amis ni ma famille. Ma mère qui ne prie pas, jeûne et prépare l'iftar par tradition. Quant à moi, je fais toutes ces obligations. Cela gâche ma vie privée et cela m'ennuie. Il faut laisser les gens vivre tel qu'ils en ont envie. »

I. : « Je ne suis pas le ramadan. Et quand on s'en étonne, je dis que j'ai un ulcère ! » ■

Nouvelles du Pays

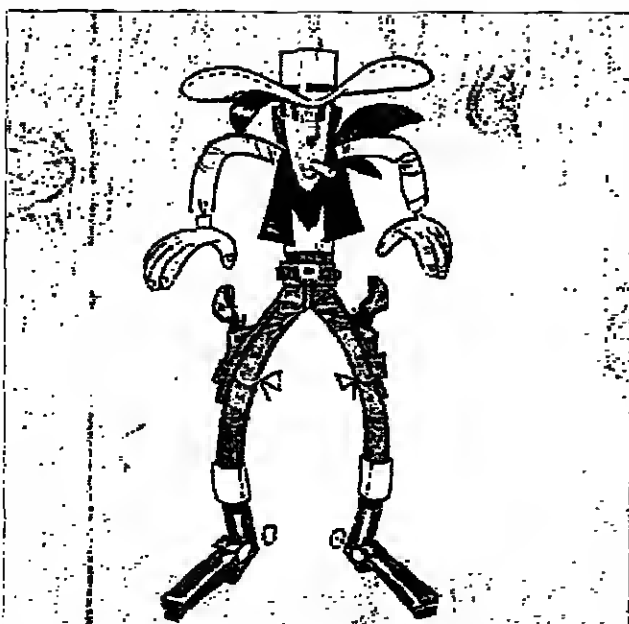
Culture

Angoulême : le rendez-vous des BD

Le 25^e Festival international de la bande dessinée s'ouvre aujourd'hui à Angoulême. Jusqu'au 25 janvier, cette ville du sud-ouest de la France va « buller » sur le thème du voyage. Pérégrinations à travers l'imaginaire.

« A de grandes franchises d'inspiration », avait indiqué sur le carnet de notes du scénariste de l'œuvre. François Bourgeon, l'un de ses professeurs de collège. Depuis, cette capacité d'imaginer a été reconnue par tous, et le célèbre auteur des *Passagers du Vent* fait partie des plus grands créateurs français de la bande dessinée. Pas étonnant alors que sa récente série de science-fiction, *Le Cycle de Cyann*, serve de prétexte à l'exposition « Les mondes indépendants » de cette 25^e édition du festival d'Angoulême, consacrée au voyage. Une thématique déclinée dans les nombreuses autres animations du festival.

Le Grand prix de la Ville d'Angoulême rendra par ailleurs hommage à des auteurs tels que Gary Larson ou André Franquin, le père de Gaston Lagaffe et du Marsupilami, aujourd'hui disparu et qui fut le premier à recevoir le grand prix en 1974. Le périple dans l'imaginaire se transformera ensuite en un grand tour du monde. Quelques vingt-cinq



auteurs non francophones tiendront en effet la vedette dans l'exposition « Les planètes BD », incontournables du

manga japonais, genre qui connaît en France le vif engouement des moins de 25 ans, nouvelle vague des comics américains, créateurs argentin ou encore européens.

Bulles enjoutées
Invité d'honneur cette année, le Portugal prolongera cette invitation au voyage par une exposition « L'océan », consacrée à ses auteurs et réalisée en partenariat avec les festivals d'Amadora, Porto et la Biennale de Lisbonne. Comme la plupart des expositions, elle vivra au-delà du festival puisqu'elle sera ensuite présentée à

l'Exposition universelle de Lisbonne, en 1998. Enfin les enfants ne seront pas en reste puisqu'avec « Jouets en bulles et bulles enjouées », ils découvriront les jouets dans l'univers de la BD.

Populaire, festive, la manifestation internationale d'Angoulême est parvenue à se hisser petit à petit aux premiers rangs des grands événements culturels français. Près de 600 auteurs de bandes dessinées viennent présenter à un public, chaque fois plus nombreux, les aventures de leurs héros. En 1997, ils ont ainsi été plus de 160.000 à profiter des nombreux lieux d'expositions et d'animations.

Partie en 1972 d'une exposition, « Dix millions d'images », transformée en Salon deux ans plus tard sous l'impulsion de la municipalité charentaise, la manifestation qui a accueilli tous les grands de la BD dont Herge, le père de Tintin, s'est transformée en festival en 1996, d'affirmer sa double identité culturelle et festive. A la même

dée, elle décidait de développer son action de promotion de la bande dessinée toute l'année, notamment avec une grande exposition sur la bande dessinée européenne votée à l'unanimité par les États-Unis pendant plus d'un an. Le festival d'Angoulême est ainsi devenu en 25 ans le rendez-vous incontournable des amoureux du 9^e art. Un âge encore bien jeune en regard des 50 ans de celui dont elle célèbre aussi l'anniversaire : Lucky Luke, le cow-boy qui tire plus vite que son ombre. ■

Florence Raynal



Un réflexe. Une manière de mieux

démarrer la journée. Chaque matin, ils sont des milliers à saisir Al-Rai par la fin pour savourer les nouvelles facettes d'Abu Marjoub et Abu Mohammad. Leur papa, Emad Hajaj, depuis quatre ans au service du quotidien national, il livre chaque jour sa vision de l'actualité. Ses porte-parole, deux Jordaniens : l'un irascible, péremptoire, nerveux et acharné de la politique, c'est Abu Marjoub, l'autre, dilettante, gentil et je-m'en-foutiste, c'est Abu Mohammad. « A eux deux, ils représentent une certaine harmonie de la vie en Jordanie entre des peuples d'origines différentes », veut expliquer Emad. S'il avoue dessiner avec plus de facilité Mohammad (qui, par son léger embonpoint, lui ressemble un peu), il n'a pas de préférence. Ses deux héros sont là chacun à leur manière pour raconter les soucis journaliers des Jordaniens. Pas de grands discours. Juste des situations prises dans la vie de tous les jours, celle de ses amis ou de sa famille. « Chaque semaine, je passe du temps chez mes parents, je m'assois et j'écoute mon père. Un père qui m'a inspiré pour le personnage d'Abu Marjoub et qui a surtout déclenché son goût du croquis : « Il avait

Abu Marjoub : « Salut le Jourdain ! Mohammad, souris pour la photo ! » Abu Mohammad : « Mon Dieu, nous devenons célèbres ! ». La dédicace d'Emad Hajaj (en photo) : « Pour les lecteurs du Jourdain, amicalement ».

L'habitude de dessiner des symboles magiques et des femmes nues sur ses paquets de cigarettes. Quand j'étais petit, cela me fascinait et j'essayais ensuite de l'imiter. Aujourd'hui à 31 ans, c'est lui qu'on plagie. Emad Hajaj a imposé son style aiguisé à la pointe de son crayon, qui ne noircit que les écrans d'ordinateur. Les Français le comparèrent à Plantu, l'incontournable illustrateur du

Monde, qu'il admire d'ailleurs beaucoup. N'a-t-il jamais tenté l'aventure de la BD ? Une fois, il y a longtemps. Sans succès. « Et on n'est pas habitué à la BD, qui est plutôt réservée aux enfants, le système des bulles est méconnu et les symboles visuels pas toujours compris ». Les Jordaniens préfèrent la prose du crayonné comique, et politique, à la fois. L'exploit d'Emad Hajaj, c'est justement de permettre la rencontre quotidienne d'un Abu Marjoub et d'un Abu Mohammad. ■

Yannick Lainé

C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

Cinéma

Trafic. Un film de Jacques Tati, en couleurs, sous-titré en arabe (1971). M. Holot a inventé une petite voiture avec laquelle il compte réaliser un coup d'éclat au salon automobile d'Amsterdam. Lundi 26 janvier à 20h30 au Centre culturel français. Renseignements au 637009.

مهرجان المثل

Robert Evans' latest remake

By Amy Wallace

HOLLYWOOD—When Robert Evans thinks about his life—its dizzy highs and devastating lows—the 67-year-old movie producer is confident of one thing: The sign has all the makings of a great motion picture.

Evans does more than muse about this. In the private editing room of his lavish Beverly Hills estate, he has spliced actual television sound bites into a montage that he thinks is the perfect opening sequence for a film about himself.

"First an actor, then the head of a movie studio, saved Paramount from ruin with 'Love Story,' 'The Godfather' and 'Chinatown,' was the toast of the town until the fall to end all falls," a breathless announcer says as Evans and Ali MacGraw, one of his four ex-wives, appear on the screen. "A man whose life is a Hollywood fantasy. This story has it all: sex, drugs, scheming movie stars and murder."

Which is why Evans is so sore at Dustin Hoffman.

After all the producer has weathered—a cocaine conviction, the murder of a business partner, money troubles and the critical failure of his most recent films—he remains proud of his life story and prouder

still of having survived to tell it. So it rankles Evans to think that while he dreams of making his life into a movie, Hoffman has gone out and actually done it.

"Wag the Dog," a comedy from New Line Cinema that opened in December, stars Hoffman as flamboyant Hollywood producer Stanley Mott. Mott wears oversized glasses and parades around in a bathrobe, just like Evans. He has unnaturally tan skin and defiantly big hair, just like Evans. He even delivers Evans' signature line: "The impossible is possible!"

Evans, resplendent in a black-and-white striped dress shirt, pale yellow sweater, off-white blazer, black slacks and bolo tie, is sitting in his huge office on the Paramount Pictures lot, talking about something he can't quite fathom: the Robert Evans Renaissance.

Long before Hoffman inked a deal to immortalize an Evans-like character in film, Evans did his best to immortalize himself in a memoir, *The Kid Stays in the Picture*. Reviewers called the 1994 book shallow, self-aggrandizing, evasive—and impossible to put down.

Then the autobiography came out on tape, with Evans reading his own prose in his sonorous voice. Hollywood has not been the same since. Today, young agents,

producers and executives play the tapes in their cars and at parties and even give them as gifts.

More than a dozen members of what one person half-jokingly called "the cult of Evans" were interviewed for this story. Most took pride in being able to "do Evans' voice." All said they enjoyed his audio book for the same reason: Despite the author's eccentricities—or perhaps because of them—he inspires by making one feel connected to greatness.

"Roll over, L. Ron Hubbard," said a headline in the August issue of *Details* magazine, which called Evans Hollywood's "guru du jour."

Evans welcomes the attention, even as it confuses him. It wasn't so long ago, after all, that he was a pariah.

"A guy my age doesn't get a second chance. But I did," he said. "My life reads like fiction. Cheap fiction. I was the lawless. But I came back from Jesse Jamesville."

In the '80s, Evans says persistent back pain led him to try cocaine, and in 1980 he pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor possession charge. (Sentenced to probation, he recruited his famous actor friends to participate in an anti-drug television film, "Get High on Yourself.")

Evans threw himself into making "The Cotton Club," a film with Francis Ford Coppola. But in 1983, Evans' business partner in the project, a theatrical promoter named Roy Radin, was found murdered. A year later, when the film opened and promptly flopped, Evans was despondent. Things would only get worse.

A former girlfriend of Evans was tried for Radin's murder, and though Evans was never charged, the trial testimony—which stretched into 1989—sank him deeper into despair. There were allegations of cocaine use and links to international drug trafficking and prostitution. What's more, Evans was broke.

"I had \$15 million in 1979, when no one had money. In 1989, I didn't have \$15," he says. "During the razzle-dazzle decade, I went

from a millionaire to a thousandaire."

Evans was a producer—in name only—he says—of the 1990 sequel to "Chinatown," "The Two Jakes." It was a critical and box-office failure. Evans' only income, he says, were monthly payments from a cosmetics company that used a photo of him in its ads.

He sold his beloved house—a 16-room French Regency that had been one of Greta Garbo's hideaways—to a neighbor, then rented it back month to month. He says he also considered suicide.

Ultimately, however, it was Evans' story—and his inimitable telling of it—that seems to have saved him from himself.

His memoir prompted more than one observer to compare Evans to Norma Desmond, the character in "Sunset Boulevard" who clings pathetically to days gone by.

And to be sure, the roughest years left him with some lasting quirks. Evans refuses to drive, for example—for fear, he says, "that some cop will stop me and throw something in my car because they want to arrest me. Paranoid? No. I have reason for it."

Yet somehow, Evans harnessed his past to create a future. Today, many see him as one of the film community's few links to a vital era when movies were magical.

"The established figures of Hollywood tend to be more dismissive of Bob than younger people, who I think sense what is true: Evans does not have any kind of hardening of the arteries, creatively speaking," said "Chinatown" screenwriter Robert Towne, who still turns to Evans for advice on his work. "No man loves movies more."

Evans is relaxing in his famed screening room. Dressed this evening in a black turtleneck and a bolo tie, he occupies the black leather chair in which he still views as many as five movies a week. As a fire crackles on the hearth, the producer sips a Bellini—a mix of champagne and the juice of white French peaches—and tells a visitor how best to tell his story.

"You could write this down: I'm (photographer) Helmut Newton's favorite male model," he says, offering the first of what will be many suggestions. "Helmut says, 'You know, Robert, you have a regal decency in your bone structure that I can't find anywhere else in the world. It's a good line.' Though Evans' most recent films ("Sliver," "Jade," "The Phantom" and "The Saint") have been disappointments, he continues developing projects. There is "Go Lightly," a coming-of-age story about a young woman fascinated with the film "Breakfast at Tiffany's."

"Jimmy the Runt" is about a thief who steals only from other thieves.

Evans, who has been called the reigning Dorian Gray of the movie business, also wants to do a remake of the classic Oscar Wilde story about an evil man who remains youthful as his portrait ages. In Evans' film version, set in the 21st century, the protagonist would be a woman.

Insiders note that the studio no longer lets Evans work alone. Said one: "His wings are clipped. He's got the so-called position, but he doesn't have the weight, the muscle, that he had."

Sometimes, that chafes. "I would say they don't take particularly kindly to me here (at Paramount)," Evans said the other day. "If they do, they ain't telling me about it. It's easier to get a health care plan through Congress than it is to get a picture made today."



Movie producer Robert Evans, 67, watching himself playing opposite Ava Gardner in "The Sun Also Rises" (1957). Photo by Al Seib



"I'm offered more gigs now as an actor than I was with Zanuck," says Robert Evans, primping before the mirror in his Beverly Hills mansion. Photo by Al Seib.

But Evans keeps moving. He's working on a second book, tentatively titled "Seduction." He has designed a line of greeting cards that feature women in Vargas-like poses. Inside are phrases that Evans has had copyrighted (among them: "Instant gratification takes too long").

Evans, who owns more than 100 pairs of eyeglasses, has also invented an unusual pair that rests on the forehead and cheekbones, but does not grab the nose. "These are a necessity for anyone who's had plastic surgery," he says of the design, which he has patented.

"I'm busier now than I was when I was 25, 35, 45, 55. Do you know why? I can't afford not to be," he says giddily. Which is why, after years behind the camera, he is considering appearing in front of it more often.

He played himself in Joe Eszterhas' "An Alan Smithee Film: Burn Hollywood Burn," to be released by Disney late February. And he's weighing other offers.

"I'm offered more gigs now as an actor than I was when I was with Zanuck. I've just been offered a role, against a very, very famous actress. I can't say who," he said, adding quickly: "Meryl Streep." ■

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THE STAR'S

STATION
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COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

The decision to upgrade is becoming easier than ever: PC for you, PC for me

By Jahra Ghneim

Special to The Star
THERE IS no doubt that personal computers are increasingly becoming a household item. Even in Jordan, you can nowadays get a 166 MHz PC with 32 MB of RAM and all the peripherals for about JD 800.

Everywhere you look computers are becoming smaller, and more powerful. It is very confusing for a buyer to decide when and what to buy.

This revolution started earlier last year when Compaq launched, in the USA, its first sub \$1,000 PC. This was an indication that PC makers have made up their mind to fight the Network Computer (NC) wave which was promising to deliver sub \$500 to the corporate market.

Large PC manufacturers saw in this a threat to their share in the lucrative corporate market. It is true that the NC is aimed at a different environment, but the trend it set was scary to PC manufacturers. It was fortunate for PC manufacturers that, due to differences over standards and software, IBM was the only company during last year to come up with a

viable NC solution. On the other hand, the cheap PC has more appeal to everybody. An abundance of applications and options, and an established mass market make it hard to fight.

It is fascinating to see how the forces of competition are



driving the industry. When Intel noticed that PC manufacturers are starting to use rival chips from Cyrix and AMD, to include in their new PCs and capture up to 25 percent of the market in that PC category, it responded immediately by declaring price cuts on all of its chips.

You can get now a Pentium MMX chip in the US market

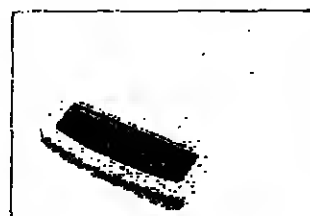
for as little as \$70. Intel has also announced that it has come up with a version of its Pentium II chip which doesn't have the cache memory that usually comes with the chip. This will lead to a drop in the price of the chip to as low as \$200, which will make a Pentium II affordable to the masses.

A fact I would like to note here is that chip manufacturers are discovering, all the time, new ways to add more processing power to chips and ways to cram it onto smaller space making future computers leaner and meaner (smaller and more powerful). Another factor is helping in establishing this new category of PCs, the economic crisis in Asia and a huge demand for all kinds of RAM chips. In addition, technological advancement, have contributed to a drop in the prices of DRAM chips by 75 percent during last year. The introduction of Windows 95 (which is a memory intensive application) contributed to the rise in demand for memory chips, and thus a rise in its supply over the past three years.

Hard disks are also following the trend. They are becoming ever cheaper and more

ArchTek America's supreme products, from Kayyali Corp. in Jordan: SmartLink 3334 Voice Series

KAYYALI CORP. for Computer & Electronics is the authorized distributor for ArchTek America Corp. products in Jordan and has introduced the SmartLink 3334 Voice Series to the local market. These modems provide a speed of 33.6 kilobits per second (kbps), built on the design adopted by ArchTek from Lucent Technologies, the global telecommunications giant. It also includes USA components of an AT&T chip set. The Voice Series delivers comprehensive features that ensure a secure and reliable



connection. Its features include full duplex speaker phone, voice mail, fax reception, pager notification, caller ID, fax on demand and fax forwarding options. SmartLink modems support the latest communication

protocols and standards, including the ITU-T for V.34 bis, MNP 2-5, V.42bis/V.42 for data compression and error correction. Taking its data compression into consideration, the actual performance speed of this modem could reach 115.02 kilobits per second!

The SmartLink 3334 Voice Series supports most operating systems including Windows NT 4.0, Windows 95 all DOS versions from 5.0 and above. It also comes with a five year warranty.

For further information, contact Kayyali Corp. at telephone 5520310.

News update

Internet 2 in the works

Internet 2 is the next-generation project to upgrade the infrastructure of the Internet, benefiting tens of millions of users all over the world. Accordingly, there is need to support research and development efforts towards achieving Internet 2 applications, connections, and operation. IBM has recently announced its commitment to Internet 2 technology, saying

that it has made a \$3.5 million commitment to support its development. This grant will go to seven major US universities.

Stay in touch with NETS Abroad

For all those with loved ones abroad, NETS is introducing a method to stay in touch with friends and family called NETS Abroad. By utilizing a Local-Internationals chat link, by

which local NETS BBS subscribers communicate with users abroad who log onto the NETS site through the Internet, cheap communications are achieved! If that isn't enough, NETS wants to offer users abroad a one month free trial, to connect to NETS through the Internet. This service is exclusive to NETS subscribers. To find out more about NETS Abroad, call 5510101 or log into NETS and go to NETS Abroad.

powerful. On New Year's eve, IBM declared that its scientists have come up with the technology which will allow them to manufacture a 12 GB (Gigabyte) hard disk within the next three years.

The vision that technologists have is for computers to be ubiquitous, meaning invisible, and useful in every aspect of our lives. They want the computer to sit in the kitchen, in the living room, in the office, and even in the car (Intel has even released a prototype of its smart car).

For this to be done, computing power needs to be compact yet powerful. Current trends in the computing world

are making this vision a reality. Maybe you are content now with your Pentium 90—, to which you might have added 64 MB of RAM recently, which is not a bad idea—but very soon, you may realize that there is a very formidable voice recognition system which requires a Pentium 200 machine with 64 MB of RAM.

I am sure that, at that moment, the decision to upgrade won't be so hard, especially if the current trends continue, and I do not see why they will not.

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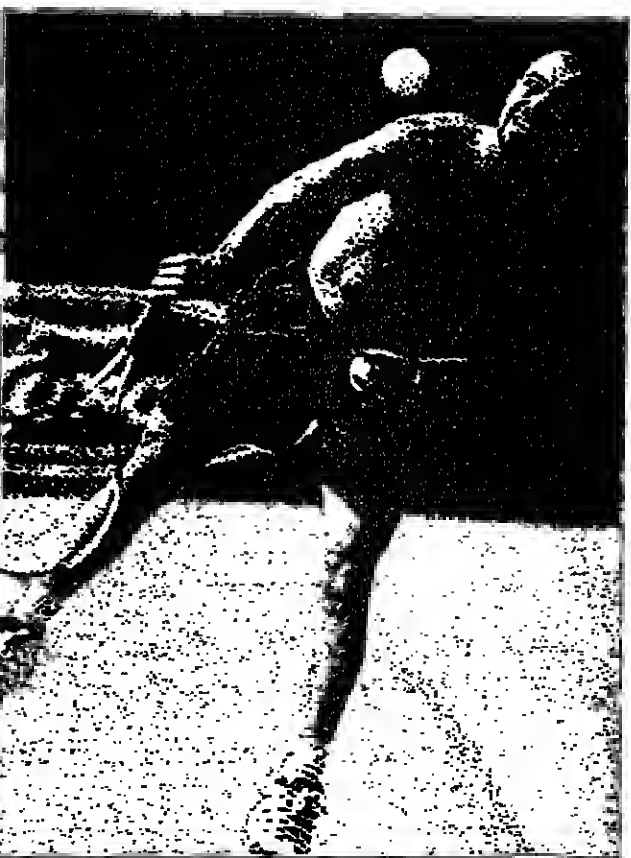
Youth turns up the heat in Australia

By John Barrett

BJORNS BORG, a slight, round-shouldered figure at the age of 17, heating Buster Mottram in the junior final at Wimbledon from 2-5 down in the final set; 16-year-old Chris Evert curving her way through to the semi-finals of the 1971 US Open with metronomic precision and pushing Billie Jean King to the limit; John McEnroe, aged 18, winning eight matches at Wimbledon in 1977 as he roars through to the semi-finals; Martina Navratilova at the age of 17 serving and volleying like a veteran as she leads the

Czech team to victory in the 21-and-under BP Cup at Torquay; Ken Rosewall, in 1953, playing precision tennis to beat America's Vic Seixas to win the French Championships at the age of 18; Steffi Graf, all arms and legs at the age of 14, taking Jo Durie to 9-7 in the final set in the fourth round at Wimbledon; Monica Seles, a frail 15-year-old in 1989, scaring the pants off the same Graf, by now the defending champion, in a nail-biting semi-final at the French Open; Martina Hingis, aged 12, winning the junior crown in Paris against an embarrassed

SPORTS



Agassi

Belgian girl five years her senior.

They are rare, these moments of revelation. And precious. To have witnessed two within the last week has been quite extraordinary. The first came unexpectedly in Adelaide. I had arrived at Memorial Drive last Friday to see how Andre Agassi was faring in his attempt to re-establish himself after falling out of the top 100 last year for the first time since he turned professional in 1986.

It was hot and humid on quarter-finals day at the Australian Hard Court Championships. Agassi had asked for a wild card into the draw because he needed the match practice. He was due to play Bren Steven of New Zealand, who had put out the French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten in the second round.

Around the club there was a good deal of chat about the progress of a local lad who had been given the other wild card after winning a domestic event the previous week. In fact, at 16 years and 10 months, Lleyton Hewitt had already become a minor celebrity by eliminating two fellow Aussies first Scott Draper and then Mark Woodforde who has been something of a mentor because they both come from Adelaide.

Hewitt's quarter-final opponent was a good young American called Vince Spadea. The winner would play either Agassi or Steven. Agassi's win in three sets on a scorching afternoon was convincing. The New Zealander had gone off to a golden start and won the opening set 6-1. Agassi, looking much leaner and fiercer than he had done last year, found his range after recovering from 0-40 in the first game of the second set and allowed Steven only two more games.

"I'm getting better with every match," said the 27-year-old American. No one would have disagreed. In a night match interrupted by



Martina Hingis



Pat Rafter

showers, Hewitt had beaten Spadea 6-1 in the final set to set up a meeting against his hero. "It's true. I do have posters of him at home. I can't believe I shall be on the same court as him. It's like a dream come true," he said.

For Agassi, their match was more of a nightmare. Not that the former world No 1 played badly in losing 7-6, 7-6. It was simply that Hewitt was inspired. Like Agassi, he takes the ball early, single-handed on the forehand, double-handed on the backhand, and hits it either flat and fast or with dipping topspin.

Like his hero, he is quick about the court. Standing only 5ft 10in, he has to be. What was so impressive was the way Hewitt dealt with the important points. Five times Agassi had break opportunities. Three times Hewitt hit winning second serves, two of them aces. On the other two, he won the rallies. There was a fearless intensity about Hewitt's play that was remarkable. The telling lob he hit to turn the second tie-break his way was the work of an instinctive match player.

Afterwards, Agassi admitted he had underestimated his opponent. "I kept thinking he would go away," he said. "I should have given him more heat on those key points." But that would have been easy, as Jason Stoltenberg discovered in the final. Despite leading 4-2 in the third set tie-break, he was outplayed as Hewitt took the next five points, among them another telling lob, for the title.

"I wasn't nervous at all," said Hewitt. "I suppose I had nothing to lose and everything to gain." What young Hewitt has gained is a new record. Never before has a player as young as this won the first tournament he has entered on the ATP Tour. The only other senior event he has played is last year's Australian Open, where he was a qualifier and lost in the first round. Only two younger men have ever won tournaments on the Tour. Michael Chang was 16.7 when he won in San Francisco in 1988, and Aaron Krickstein was 16.2 when he took the Tel Aviv title in 1983. It is a measure of Hewitt's

ability that he should have been able to bounce back from such a physically and psychologically draining week to beat world No 4 Jonas Bjorkman in the first round of this week's tournament in Sydney. He even served for the match in the second round against fellow Australian Michael Tebbutt.

It was probably no bad thing that Hewitt lost. He will need all the time available to prepare properly for the Australian Open, which begins in Melbourne next Monday. The second moment of revelation followed fast, on the heels of the first. Venus Williams, the black teenage American who had reached the final of the US Open unseeded last September, had arrived in Sydney last week in good time to acclimatize. At a press conference held on the eve of the tournament, Williams, ranked 21, spoke of her conviction that she would soon overtake fellow teenager Martina Hingis as the world No 1. Eyebrows were raised. Confidence is an admirable quality, over-confidence less attractive. Poignantly, the Sydney



Venus Williams

draw had thrown these two together in the second round, provided that Williams could beat Ruxandra Dragomir of Romania in the first. As one of the top four seeds, defending champion Hingis had a bye. When Dragomir retired with a thigh injury after losing the first set 6-4, Williams bemoaned the fact that she was losing the opportunity for match practice.

Practice was a commodity that Hingis lacked. She had arrived late from Europe, presumably confident that she would slip back into the form that had won her three of the four Grand Slam crowns in 1997. So dominant was she last year that she lost only five times, despite a five-week gap that had required arthroscopic surgery on an injured knee. As Hingis should have remembered, summer afternoons in Sydney and Melbourne can be brutally hot. With so little time to acclimatize, Hingis was oolocky the day of her match against the young American. She was losing the match when every deep breath seems to burn the lungs.

The fact that Williams had not taken more than six games off the world No 1 in three previous meetings, the last the

US Open final did not dismay the American. "I made a lot of mistakes in that match," she said. "I was basically out of control and she took advantage of me playing so badly."

It was true. Williams had sprayed far too many errors from the back of the court that day, going for too much, too soon. Clearly, she had learned her lesson. In a magnificent battle, in which both women suffered dehydration and the onset of cramp, Williams beat Hingis 3-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Her power from the baseline was simply too much for an opponent who looked a trifle slower than usual. Williams served much better than she had done in New York and volleyed well, too. This was a magnificent example of positive thinking overcoming the skill and guile of the greatest match player for her age the game has seen.

As the season unfolds, the rivalry that is developing between Hingis and the Williams family—Venus's younger sister Serena beat both Martina Lucio and Lindsay Davenport this week—is likely to produce the best tennis since the days of Evert and Navratilova. It will be a privilege to witness it.

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